DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 400 393 CE 072 696

AUTHOR Huws, Ursula; And Others
TITLE Teleworking and Gender.
INSTITUTION Sussex Univ., Brighton (England). Inst. for Employment Studies.
REPORT NO ISBN-1-85184-244-6
PUB DATE 96
NOTE 91p.
AVAILABLE FROM The Institute for Employment Studies, Mantell Building, University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 9RF, England, United Kingdom; phone +44(0)-1273-686751; fax: +44(0)-1273-690430.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Education; *Employment Practices; Entrepreneurship; Females; Flexible Working Hours; Foreign Countries; Males; Part Time Employment; *Self Employment; *Sex Differences; *Sex Role
IDENTIFIERS Netherlands; Sweden; *Telecommuting; United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

This report details a survey of 188 teleworkers throughout Europe that was supplemented by face-to-face interviews with 9 teleworkers in the United Kingdom, Sweden, and the Netherlands. The group of male and female home-based translators was chosen for two reasons: most surveys and case studies of teleworking have been company based and unable to study the self-employed, and past research on teleworking that has focused on gender differences has compared males and females in different occupational fields. Findings indicated some evidence of a breakdown in the differences between men and women, with some men taking on "feminine" roles within the household, whereas some female teleworkers were "breadwinners." This finding supported the view that gender differences in labor market behavior resulted from the different social situations in which men and women tended to find themselves. Although the majority said they had chosen this form of work because they wanted to be autonomous, free, and "their own boss," in practice they had less freedom to control their time because of the unpredictability of the work and the shortness of the deadlines. A very high and unmet demand for training was uncovered. Teleworking was found to have enormous potential to become an instrument that promotes equality of opportunity between men and women in the labor market. However, the study concluded this potential could only be realized if teleworking were introduced in ways that maximize choices. (Contains 34 references.) (YLB)

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TELEWORKING AND GENDER

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Report 317

Published by:

THE INSTITUTE FOR EMPLOYMENT STUDIES
Mantell Building
University of Sussex
Brighton BN1 9RF
UK

Tel. + 44 (0) 1273 686751
Fax + 44 (0) 1273 690430

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British Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 1-85184-244-6

Printed in Great Britain by Microgen UK Ltd

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Acknowledgements

The survey of Wordbank translators, which is presented here, would not have been possible without the contributions of Wordbank staff, including Giles Trentham, managing director, Ola Oji, production manager, and Henrietta Bennett, production purchasing officer. We would like to express our appreciation of this support, and to extend our thanks to Androulla Soteri, Milo Connolly and Emmanuel Equey, who carried out the data analysis.

We would also like to place on record our thanks to the translators who took part in our survey, to the experts who agreed to be interviewed by us, and to Professor Swasti Mitter from the United Nations University Institute of Technology, Nicola Armstrong from Massey University, New Zealand, and Jane Paul from BECTU who attended a meeting in Brussels in January, 1996 to discuss a preliminary report of the project's work. Lastly, we would like to express our gratitude to Maria Stratigaki of the Equal Opportunities Unit of DGV for her patient and untailing support of the project.

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Summary

The survey whose results are presented in this report formed part of a one-year research project on teleworking and gender, partially funded by the Equal Opportunities Unit of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs, and carried out by Analytica in the UK in collaboration with the ADA Women's Technology Centre in Greece, the TNO in the Netherlands, and Dr Ewa Gunnarsson in Sweden.

This report opens with an overview of previous research on gender and teleworking which provides the context for the survey of male and female home based translators.

This group was chosen for two reasons. The first is that most surveys and case studies of teleworking have been company based and have therefore been unable to study the self-employed who are, by definition, outside the scope of such studies. The second is that past research on teleworking which has focused on gender difference, has compared male teleworkers and female teleworkers in different occupational groups, thus making it difficult to tell which differences can be accounted for by occupational difference, and which can be explained by gender difference. The only occupational group involving significant numbers of teleworkers which past research has shown to be divided equally between men and women is translation, so a study of freelance home based translators enables us to compare male and female teleworkers while controlling for occupation.

A postal survey of 188 teleworkers throughout Europe was carried out, supplemented by face-to-face interviews with a further nine teleworkers in the UK, Sweden and the Netherlands, and the results are presented in this report.

The picture revealed by the survey is a complex one. There was some evidence of a breakdown in the differences between men and women, with some men taking on 'feminine' roles within the household while some female teleworkers were 'bread-winners', giving support to the view that gender differences in labour market behaviour are not intrinsic but result from the different social situations in which men and women tend to find themselves.

In many ways, however, the male teleworkers were paying a high price for this 'feminisation', in terms of relatively low earnings, sometimes leading to financial hardship, precariousness of employment and lack of control over the flow of work.

Paradoxically, although the majority of respondents said that they had chosen this form of work because they wanted to be autonomous, free and 'my own boss', in practice they had rather less freedom to control their time than many office based employees, because of the unpredictability of the work and the shortness of the deadlines. During periods when there was work, they often had to work very long and antisocial hours, while during periods without, they were unable to enjoy their leisure because of a fear that the next job might not appear.

The survey also uncovered a very high (and unmet) demand for training, especially IT related training, amongst this group of teleworkers.

Teleworking clearly has enormous potential to become an instrument which promotes equality of opportunity between men and women in the labour market. In principle, it makes it easier to break down traditional gender roles: for men to play a greater part in the home and in family life and for women to participate in the wider world of work, even when employers may be located many kilometres away. It makes it possible to 'mix and match' different employment options in flexible ways so that people can choose the form which suits them best during each stage of the lifecycle. It potentially brings new skills and knowledge within the range of all, and it makes it possible to share work more equally between different social groups and different regions.

However, this study concludes that this potential can only be realised if teleworking is introduced in ways which maximise choices, rather than minimising them. There is a need for further

research to investigate the needs of freelance teleworkers for training and other forms of social support, and to investigate the gender aspects of other forms of teleworking.

1. Introduction

In April 1995, the Equal Opportunities Unit of the European Commission's Directorate General for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs (DGV) provided a grant to support a study of gender and teleworking. This project, which was co-sponsored by Analytica and Wordbank in the UK, the TNO in the Netherlands, the ADA Women's Technology Center in Greece, and the Swedish Federation of Professional Employees in Sweden, involved an interdisciplinary collaboration between specialists in all four countries.

The project team comprised Dr Ewa Gunnarsson in Sweden, Thea Weijers at the TNO in the Netherlands, Vangelio Trova and Katerina Arvanitaki of ADA in Greece and Ursula Huws and Sarah Podro of Analytica in the UK.

In addition to the survey whose results are presented here, the work of the project team included a review of the evidence on gender and teleworking in each of the four participating countries, and the production of detailed guidelines for good practice in the employment and support of teleworkers in each of five categories (partially home based teleworkers, fully home based teleworkers, mobile teleworkers, freelance teleworkers and teleworkers employed on remote sites controlled by the employer). A full report of the project's work is available from the Equal Opportunities Unit of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs.

2. Teleworking and Gender — the Context

From the 1950s onwards, the literature on technological change contained passing references to the idea that telecommunications, combined with computing technology, could enable work to be relocated away from the traditional office (*eg* Jones, 1957-58). However, this notion, variously christened 'telecommuting', 'flexiplace', the 'electronic cottage', 'networking' and 'teleworking', only began to be widely discussed during the 1970s (Huws, 1991). A combination of different factors contributed to this interest. These included a growing concern about the amount of energy which was consumed by commuting in the wake of the 1974 oil crisis, the increasing proliferation and cheapness of computer technology, and competitive pressures on employers to explore all possible means of reducing costs in a period when markets had ceased to expand.

However, these developments were also taking place during a period when women were entering the workforce at an unprecedented pace. Between 1975 and 1994, women's economic activity rate across the EU rose from 46 per cent to 56 per cent, while that for men fell from 84 per cent to 76 per cent (Eurostat data in EC DGV, 1995, p.187). This entry of women into the workforce placed on the social dialogue agenda new demands for such rights as equality of treatment at work, childcare facilities, maternity rights and flexible working arrangements to acknowledge women's dual role as carers and workers.

This movement was reflected in the introduction of employment protection and equality legislation in most developed countries during the mid-1970s, and a sharp increase in women's involvement in trade union activity. In the UK, for instance, between 1970 and 1979 women's membership of trade unions increased by 41.7 per cent, whereas male membership increased by only 6.1 per cent (Huws, 1995).

The jobs in which most of these women were employed, many on a part-time basis, were heavily concentrated in precisely those industries and occupations which were in the process of computerisation — financial and business services, distribution, public administration and the white collar service functions carried out within manufacturing industry (EOC, 1982).

By 1995, 78.2 per cent of women in employment in the EU were employed in service industries, compared with 53.8 per cent of men, and 30.3 per cent of women workers were part time, compared with only 4.8 per cent of men (Eurostat data, 1995).

The proposal that some of these jobs could be converted into telework was therefore not made in a vacuum. It arrived at a historical moment when women's position in the workforce was already a focus of debate, and it was introduced into labour markets which were already in upheaval. They were not only highly segregated by gender but this sexual division of labour was also actively being contested, in a context of job cuts and rising unemployment. It was therefore not surprising that the idea of teleworking should have been highly charged with contradictory meanings for women workers.

On the one hand, it could be presented as offering the flexibility which working women had been seeking for at least the past decade. For some commentators it appeared to offer the perfect solution to the intractable problem of combining work with the demands of caring for children or other family members. American feminist Barbara Gutek, for instance, saw teleworking as an unqualified boon for women, with the potential for liberating them from the need to work under male control in offices, increasing autonomy and unleashing new possibilities for independent creativity (Gutek, 1983). Although they were not accompanied by such a generous estimate of women's intellectual capabilities, similar views were expressed by many other, non-feminist commentators. Alvin Toffler, for instance, enthused about telework's potential to allow 'married secretaries caring for small children at home to continue to work' (Toffler, 1981).

In other cases, it is clear that the advocates of teleworking believed that women with children should not have been working outside the home in the first place, and welcomed its potential for returning them to the home. In Britain, for instance, a leading industrialist who was influential in forming

the telecommunications policy of the Thatcher Government wrote, in 1982:

> *'No institution has suffered more than marriage (as a result of industrial society). The growth of transient marriage and one-parent families is the counterpoint to the decline of the extended family and the gradual withering of family responsibility for the old, the sick, the handicapped and the disabled. They have all become the responsibility of the state because home based family society could not cope.*
>
> *'If the underlying economic trends were anti-family in the past, perhaps the future offers better prospects for our basic unit of social organisation because of trends in our working lives . . . . With the array of telecommunications products and services becoming available at ever-reducing costs in real terms, the burden of change must be towards home centring our lives rather than town or city centring as at present for work as we know it.'* (Aldrich, 1982)

In a similar vein in the UK, we find the Bishop of Warwick claiming that teleworking will bring down the divorce rate[1], and Shirley Williams, a prominent British member of parliament, announcing in 1981 that 'microelectronics offers the opportunity of reuniting the family' (Williams, 1981).

In such a context it is not surprising that some feminists were deeply suspicious of teleworking, agreeing with US feminist Jan Zimmerman whose response to Toffler's idea of the 'electronic cottage' was to comment that it would mean that 'Computers at home could allow women . . . to do not one, but two jobs in their cozy, rose-covered, picket-fenced, white-frame, electronic bungalows' (Zimmerman, 1982).

Neither was it surprising that virtually all the early empirical research carried out on the working conditions of teleworkers[2] should have been undertaken by women, many of them within

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[1] *Planning for Homework* conference, organised by the Housing Associations Charitable Trust, London, May 2nd, 1984.

[2] Although some research on teleworking had already been carried out, notably by Jack Nilles in California, this focused on the telecommunications/transportation trade-off and the extent to which telecommuting could offer a substitute for office-based employment, and did not involve study of the employment conditions of teleworkers.

a research perspective explicitly designed to address issues of equality between the sexes. There was clearly an urgent need to discover whether this form of working was likely, on balance, to provide new opportunities for women, or whether it would reinforce their secondary status as housewives and carers.

Thus the earliest studies of teleworkers were published by Margrethe Olson in the United States (1981), Elsbeth Monod in France (1982), Ursula Huws in the United Kingdom (1984), Ewa Gunnarsson and Gitte Vedel in Sweden and Denmark (1985), Merete Lie in Norway (1985), Paola Manacorda in Italy (1985), Kathleen Christensen in the United States (1985), and Monika Goldmann and Godrun Richter in Germany (1987). All of these researchers were women and all, to some degree, addressed issues of equality of opportunity.

Between them, these studies revealed a complex picture. To a large extent, the occupational segregation found in the formal workplace was mirrored in the home. The higher level professional, technical and executive home based jobs tended to be held by men, with a small minority of high achieving women amongst their number.

This group was characterised by fairly strong labour market bargaining power (based on scarce skills which were in high demand by the employers). As a result, working conditions were good and wage levels relatively high. These teleworkers were likely to have a separate room in which to work, a wife or paid servant to act as a gatekeeper and carry out the housework, and a job which involved enough variety and social interaction to keep social isolation at bay.

At the other extreme was an overwhelmingly female group of homeworkers carrying out traditionally female work like data entry, answering the telephone or routine clerical work. This work was generally low skilled and low paid, with self-employed status and payment by results. It was very monotonous, exclusively home based and associated with extreme social isolation. This group shared many of the characteristics of traditional homeworkers engaged in tasks like sewing, assembly, packing or addressing envelopes. Indeed, it was not possible to draw a sharp line between 'homeworking' and 'teleworking' in this category.

There was a continuum between tasks not involving new technology such as packing cards, collating documents, stuffing

envelopes or typing using mechanical or electric typewriters, and data entry, checking and updating databases and typing using a word processor or computer. Any attempt to demarcate the two groups was likely to be arbitrary since the same women could often be found carrying out both types of task.

In between lay a more ambiguous group, partaking of some of the characteristics of both of these categories of teleworker. These were workers with relatively high skill and education levels, engaged in specialist professional or technical work such as editing, indexing, translation, proof reading, technical writing or computer programming. However, they were distinguished from the first group (of mainly male professionals) by being women with caring responsibilities whose bargaining power with the employers was reduced by their need to be based at home. These women often earned considerably below the going rate for on-site workers doing the same work, regarding teleworking not as their preferred form of work so much as an alternative to not working at all.

A common theme in much of this research is the difficulty of the choices facing women who are trying to reconcile the demands of working with those of caring. Whatever option they choose — going out to work full time or part time, giving up work altogether or working from home, it is recognised that this will involve some sacrifices. Teleworking is frequently seen as the best compromise available in their own particular circumstances.

Thus, while it is inaccurate to see women teleworkers as exploited victims who have made no active choice in determining their own circumstances, it is also inaccurate to see them as entirely free agents who would necessarily choose this form of working as a permanent way of life. Any sociological analysis of their situation must therefore be based on a recognition that their circumstances are determined by a complex interplay between structure and agency. This is a theme to which we will return below.

During the 1980s, teleworking began to be taken seriously as a subject of study by a number of agencies, including the European Commission's DG XIII and the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, as well as international, national and local government organisations, telecommunications suppliers, computer companies, consultancies and academic institutions.

A large number of studies of teleworking, many of them very well funded, were commissioned. However, very few of these looked at gender in any systematic way. Rather, the focus of these studies was to determine the factors likely to facilitate or constrain the development of teleworking, to identify the industries and occupations for which it was suitable, to estimate its extent or to investigate how it should be managed.

During this period considerable media attention was also given to the subject. A literature survey on teleworking carried out by the author in 1987 covered over 400 references in the English language alone. Needless to say, there were many more publications on the subject in other languages.

Attitudes to teleworking, as expressed in statements of the social partners, were often sharply polarised, with trade unions expressing strong reservations about its development, while employers were enthusiastic about its potential. Both parties often made reference to women's position to support their case, with trade unions expressing fears that increased homeworking would lead to the isolation and exploitation of women workers and their exclusion from the social dialogue, while employers emphasised the flexibility offered by teleworking to women with caring responsibilities. In neither case were these arguments substantiated by much evidence. Where they referred to specific cases or survey results it was often apparent that they were, in effect, describing different categories of workers.

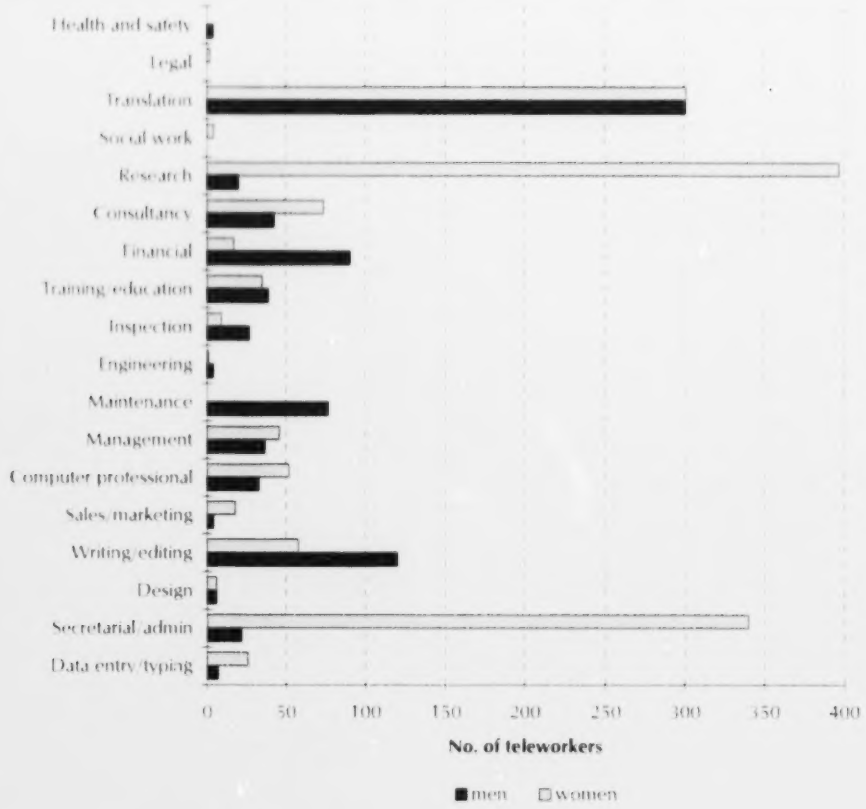
The 'exploitation' model was extrapolated from the situation of low grade, low paid pieceworkers engaged in routine tasks, while the 'new opportunities for flexibility' model was illustrated by cases drawn from higher skilled workers, often teleworkers with employee status working partially from their homes and partially from their offices. There is thus a sense in which both parties were right, and the problem lay in the extremely vague and broad definitions of teleworking which were then in use, making it possible for an example to be found which would substantiate almost any argument.

It was not until the early 1990s that large scale surveys began to be carried out making it possible to assess the relative distribution of these different types of teleworking by gender.

A survey of 179 companies in seven branches of industry by TNO in the Netherlands, published in 1992, found that there

was some degree of polarisation between teleworkers with a lower education (who were mostly women) and those with a higher education (who were mostly men). The first group worked at home all day on work which was usually tedious and offered little opportunity for communication. In addition, the work pressure could be high and problems were experienced in separating work from private life. The researchers concluded that teleworking offered the only possibility of employment to women in this group who were therefore prepared to accept the negative aspects. By contrast, the more highly educated group saw teleworking as a favourable fringe benefit (Euribase, 1992).

Figure 2.1: Breakdown of teleworking occupations by size and gender



Base: 115 groups of teleworkers

Source: Analytica, Teleworking in Britain Survey, 1992-93

A 1992 survey by Analytica in the UK came to similar conclusions. As can be seen from Figure 2.1, the occupations in which most women were found — secretarial and administrative work, data entry and 'research' (which mainly involved routine coding of questionnaires and conducting telephone interviews for market research) were also those in which the largest numbers of teleworkers were employed. These were also the teleworking jobs which were mostly likely to be based full time at home, to carry self-employed status, to consist of repetitive and monotonous work, and to be paid by results.

Table 2.1 shows the extent of the difference between selected occupational groups. As can be seen, teleworkers involved in data entry, of whom 96 per cent were women, spent on average 93 per cent of their time at home and were typically self-employed. Similarly, secretarial and administrative staff, of whom 94 per cent were female, spent 70 per cent of their working time in the home. By contrast, two groups in which men predominated, engineering and maintenance, and work in financial services (with men forming, respectively, 99 per cent and 84 per cent of these teleworking groups), spent only one per cent and 16 per cent, respectively, of their time at home, and were characterised by employee status.

Interestingly, the group which was most evenly divided between men and women was the translators, who followed the 'feminine' pattern, being typically self-employed and spending on average 96 per cent of their working time at home.

In the more skilled occupational groups, in which teleworking schemes involved much smaller numbers of staff, men tended

Table 2.1: Relationship between occupation, gender, time spent at home and employee status

Occupation	% women	% time at home	Typical employee status
data entry	96	93	self-employed
secretarial	94	70	self-employed
engineering/ maintenance	1	1	employee
financial services	16	15	employee
translation	50	96	self-employed

Source: Analytica, Teleworking in Britain Survey, 1992-93

to dominate. The only groups in which men and women were to be found in more or less equal numbers (in addition to the translators) were managers, sales staff, consultants and 'IT professionals' (a group which included computer programmers, systems analysts and systems designers).

Further investigation revealed some polarisation within these groups. For instance, sales staff whose work was fairly mobile, involving visits to clients from a home base, were usually male, while telesales staff, who worked entirely from their homes, were all women. Similarly, the female 'managers' were managing other home based women, while the male 'managers' were responsible for larger mixed or male only teams working in a variety of different locations. Female IT professionals were likely to be doing routine maintenance on computer programs while their male counterparts were more likely to be designing new systems.

The only occupational group of any size in which the work being carried out by men and that done by women seemed genuinely comparable was translation, a type of work which has traditionally been carried out from home, since long before the introduction of computers made it possible for the work to be delivered electronically.

In France, major studies were carried out in 1993 by DATAR (Délégation à l'Aménagement du Territoire) in association with France Télécom and by Thierry Breton. The first drew attention to the danger that much of the routine, low level clerical work of the type normally done by women, such as compiling address lists, medical or legal databases, catalogues or other large data sets, could be relocated to the Caribbean, India or the Philippines (*Le Monde*, 1993) and appealed for teleworking schemes to be set up in France to counter this trend, especially in underdeveloped rural regions. It estimated that some 2,000 teleworking schemes already existed, involving teleservices, secretarial work and translation, but failed to give a gender breakdown of the workforce.

The Thierry Breton study estimated that there were only 16,000 salaried teleworkers in France, but that this number was expected to increase, albeit gradually. Emphasising that teleworking was not a universal solution, the report nevertheless recommended it as contributing to flexibility and competitiveness, but also failed to give a gender analysis (Euribase, 1993).

At a European level, the TELDET project carried out population surveys in five European countries as a result of which it concluded that there are over half a million teleworkers in the UK, about 220,000 in France, 150,000 in Germany and around 100,000 each in Spain and Italy (TELDET, 1994). This survey, however, used a very broad definition of teleworking which makes it difficult to draw distinctions between the occupational categories outlined.

The TELDET survey included a similar question on interest in teleworking to a 1985 Empirica survey. A comparison of the results purports to show an enormous increase in interest over the nine years between the two surveys, with 35.8 per cent expressing interest in the UK, 31.4 per cent in Germany, 39.4 per cent in France, 35.5 per cent in Italy and rising to 54.6 per cent in Spain.

However, the two data sets are not strictly comparable. The 1985 survey was a *household* survey and excluded those who were not economically active (such as housewives, students and the unemployed) (Huws, Korte, Robinson, 1990) whereas the 1994 survey was a general *population* survey which included those who were not economically active.

The authors of the 1994 report state that 'the most widespread interest in telework can be found among groups not (yet) in employment: students, apprentices, unemployed people and younger housewives. These groups also have a low average age. Women's interest in telework, more than that of men, is dependant on their family and professional circumstances.' (TELDET, 1994, p. 8)

They also point out that interest in teleworking is highest where unemployment levels are greatest (TELDET, 1994, p. 8). This suggests that interest in teleworking is highest among precisely those groups *excluded* from the 1985 survey, which may well mean that the change in attitude over the nine-year period is much smaller than suggested by TELDET, if, indeed, it exists at all.

It is, of course, not surprising that those who are not currently in employment should express an interest in any form of employment which appears to offer an independent income especially if it can do so without creating problems of finding alternative care arrangements for dependants. This should not, however, necessarily be interpreted as a preference for this sort of work.

There were, however, a few studies in the early 1990s which addressed issues of gender. In France, Monique Haicault's work, which included studies of traditional homeworkers engaged in manual work as well as that of white collar homeworkers, shed light on the similarities between these two groups. She concluded that home based working could become a means of accentuating inequalities between men and women in the workforce, partly because of the different basis of payment. Equal pay could not be achieved in a situation in which women working from home were paid by results, while male comparators based in the workplace were paid a regular salary based on the number of hours worked (Haicault, 1993).

In the UK, a small scale qualitative survey of clerical home workers was carried out to explore the relationship between teleworking and family life. Its authors, Haddon and Tucknutt (1991), concluded that gender was a significant variable, pointing out that in general women are less likely to have access to a private space than men, which in turn leads to an increased likelihood of conflict between the demands of work and of the rest of the household.

In another in-depth study, in New Zealand, Nicola Armstrong studied the impact of teleworking on other family members and concluded that, although respondents often claimed that they had taken up teleworking in order to provide a better quality of care for their children, in practice the demands of work often led to neglect and poor childcare practices. She cites cases of crying babies being shut away out of earshot of the telephone so as not to create a bad impression on callers, and of a five-year old child who, when asked to draw pictures of her home, produced a detailed and accurate representation of her teleworker mother and her workstation (including precise details of the keyboard and monitor) but represented herself without a face.[1]

A survey of 175 traditional homeworkers published by the British National Group on Homeworking in 1994 produced similar evidence of conflict between the requirements of being a good parent and being a good worker. A quarter of the sample 'always' worked in the same room as their children, with a further 16 per cent who did so 'most of the time' and 33 per cent 'sometimes' (Huws, 1994).

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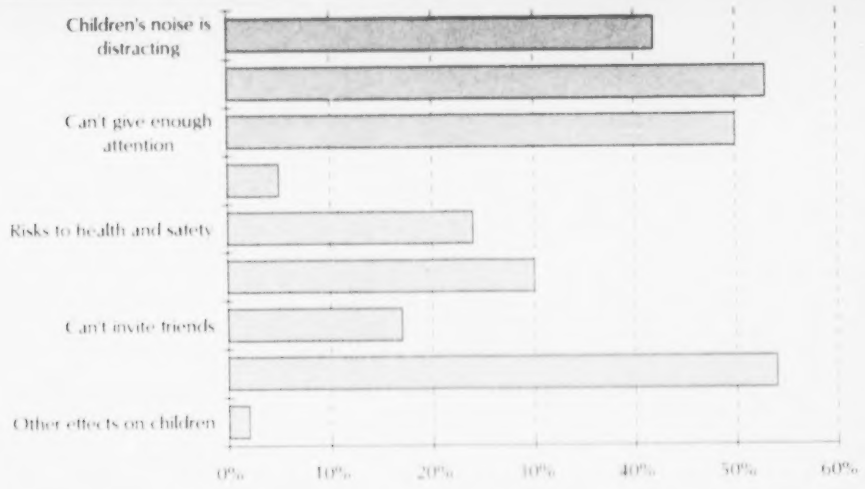
[1] Armstrong N, presentation to conference *on Gender and the Information Society*, European Commission, DGV, January, 1996.

Figure 2.2: Problems caused by presence of children when working



Base: 175 traditional homeworkers

Source: NGH National Homeworking Survey, 1994

This caused a range of problems, as can be seen from Figure 2.2. Half the sample confessed that they could not give their children enough attention, with 52 per cent complaining of interruptions and 42 per cent stating that the children's noise distracted them from their work. In three cases out of ten, children had no space to play, while in nearly a quarter of cases this caused actual risks to their health and safety. In such circumstances it is not surprising to find that 54 per cent of these homeworkers said that the work made them bad-tempered. In addition, 59 per cent said that working from home made them fed up or depressed, 58 per cent complained of stress, and a quarter reported that working from home had made them lose confidence in themselves. It is clear that a very high emotional price was being paid for the convenience of combining work with childcare in these cases (Huws, 1994, pp. 29-33).

There are two other British studies which have some relevance to our topic. The first of these is a 1993 study by Stanworth, Stanworth and Purdy of self-employed home based workers in book publishing. A postal survey of 371 workers was supplemented by 45 face-to-face interviews. About three-quarters of the sample were women, and this survey might have offered an excellent opportunity to compare male and female teleworkers

in the same occupations. Unfortunately, however, the results were not broken down by gender except in relation to whether or not they had dependent children (men were more likely to do so than women) and qualifications (women were somewhat more highly qualified, on average, than men). Like other surveys of teleworkers, this one found considerable evidence of low pay and social isolation. Of the 45 respondents interviewed in depth, 30 per cent were working from home because they had been made redundant from office based jobs, and 25 per cent were characterised as having made a 'trade-off' between their commitments to work and to family responsibilities (Stanworth *et al.*, 1993).

Another important British study which encompassed both traditional homeworkers and those using new information technology was carried out by Phizacklea and Wolkowitz (1995). This includes the results of a survey of 401 readers of the Women's Magazine, *Prima*, working from home, together with face-to-face interviews with manual, clerical and professional level home workers in Coventry. Like earlier studies by Bisset and Huws (1984), Christensen (1995), and Haicault (1993), they emphasise the continuities between these groups. However, they also take a serious theoretical look at the way homeworking is to be understood in relation to class, gender and race. In particular, they take issue with the proposition put forward by Hakim that women's acceptance of the low pay and isolation which accompany homeworking can be explained by reference to a model which perceives them as 'grateful slaves' (Hakim, 1991).

On the contrary, they argue (here echoing the views of the feminist researchers of the early 1980s, outlined above), these women, although many of them may have actively chosen to work from home, are in the main well aware that their work is underpaid and undervalued and resent the way in which their work is trivialised by the men with whom they live. 'Although it may be true that no-one forces women to do this kind of work in the way that the concept of "patriarchy" perhaps implies', they comment, 'women will continue to do it for their families not only because they have internalised these responsibilities but because there is no alternative given the persistence of segregated low paid work and the high price of childcare and domestic services.' (Phizacklea, Wolkowitz, 1995, p. 30)

The implication is that in order to grasp the full complexity of the decision to take up home based working it is necessary to

take account both of structural factors, such as the reorganisation of labour markets, and of the personal motivation of individual teleworkers, both of which are profoundly affected by gender, as well as by other factors such as race and class.

This problem is not, of course, unique to the study of teleworking; it also appears in relation to other aspects of the study of gender and employment, whenever serious attempts are made to explain the perpetuation of differences in labour market choice between men and women and the persistence of occupational segregation.

One of the limitations of this research is that it has almost all been carried out from a Northern European perspective. As Maria Stratigaki and Dina Vaiou have pointed out (1994), this perspective is rooted in a model of 'work' based on the formal economy, which renders invisible, marginal or subordinate many of the paid activities carried out in the home, in agriculture and in the informal economy, where a very high proportion of women's labour is carried out in Southern Europe.

This omission does not just have general implications for the framework within which women's employment is to be understood; it also has specific implications for the forms of teleworking most likely to be adopted in Spain, Portugal, Greece and Southern Italy.

Most of the research carried out in Northern Europe and the United States on gender and teleworking has focused on home based working — a form of working which requires both an initial capital investment in hardware and a suitable and affordable telecommunications infrastructure. For the more skilled types of work it also presupposes a computer literate layer of professional or executive workers who nevertheless have reasons for wishing to be home based, perhaps because they do not wish to commute a long distance, or have childcare problems.

In Southern Europe these preconditions are much less likely to be met. Income levels are lower, so there is less likelihood of computers being present in the home, and the telecommunications infrastructure is both more expensive and of a lower quality. Here, women who do have professional level jobs in the formal economy are both less likely to have to commute long distances and somewhat less likely to have childcare problems (partly because childcare is more likely to be available within

the extended family, and partly because middle class women are more likely to be able to afford to pay poorer women to look after their children in their homes). Nevertheless, childcare problems remain an important constraint on women's freedom of choice within the labour market at all social levels.

Other publications from the Gender and Teleworking project explore the gender aspects of forms of teleworking carried out in non-domestic premises which must be understood within the broader context of employment restructuring. Our survey of freelance teleworkers, presented below, takes a narrower focus, designed to highlight gender differences in situations where all other variables have been held constant.

3. Survey Methodology

In general, the existing studies of teleworking which have paid attention to gender have either concerned only women, or women and men in different occupations. It was therefore still a matter for conjecture whether the differences identified between men and women in teleworking could be attributed to gender *per se* or arise from job differences.

For this reason, the project team decided that it was an important task to identify a sample of teleworkers in which men and women could be matched by occupation. From the data shown in Figure 2.1 above, it seemed that translators presented an ideal sample for this purpose. Not only was this an occupational group containing large numbers of teleworkers and divided equally between men and women; it also had the advantage, from the researchers' point of view, of offering an international sample without the need for translating the questionnaire into many languages, since respondents could be assumed to be effectively bilingual.

An additional advantage of surveying freelance teleworkers is that this is a group which has been neglected in past studies of teleworking because they cannot be studied by means of case studies or employer surveys — the two main methods used to collect qualitative information in research on teleworking.

A sample of translators does not, of course, represent anything like the full extent and variety of teleworking. However, as relatively highly educated middle class professionals who are nevertheless fully home based, self-employed and modestly paid (normally by results), they could be said to represent a sort of mid point between highly paid, partially home based senior staff with employee status at one extreme, and low paid, fully home based clerical teleworkers at the other.

In order to identify a suitable list of translators, we approached a British based company called Wordbank which represents in many ways a model of the 'virtual enterprise' of the future. Although bearing some similarities to a traditional translation agency the company is in fact heavily dependent on new information and communication technologies. Most of its clients are large companies and it specialises in producing complex documents — such as company annual reports — involving an integrated production team including editors, translators, graphic designers and desktop publishing specialists. These are often produced in several languages simultaneously.

It is therefore essential that all the staff employed by the company (the vast majority of whom are located away from its central offices) should be using compatible software and linked electronically both to Wordbank and, where necessary, to each other.

The company is concerned to improve the quality of its output and the motivation of its staff so it was keen to co-operate with the project team in the research — and indeed to contribute resources towards it — in order to find out more about its staff and their requirements. It is also considering ways in which it can move further in the direction of 'virtuality', for instance by assembling teams working in different time zones to create 24 hour availability to clients without the necessity for staff to work antisocial hours, and to investigate new forms of software to support team working at a distance.

The company has a database of over 2,000 translators in 28 different countries made up of men and women in roughly equal proportions. This database represents a pool of translators from which the company draws on demand. Therefore not all the people on the list have actually worked for the company, although all are established freelance translators.

It was decided to circulate a questionnaire to 500 of these in a quota sample consisting of 250 men and 250 women, with respondents in each European country (including Eastern Europe) but excluding other continents.

Because the questionnaire was to be circulated with a Wordbank newsletter, it was decided to keep it to a maximum of four pages in length, which restricted the number of questions which could be asked. In order to encourage a good response rate, a prize of books to the value of £100 was offered to a winner to be selected

at random. Respondents were assured of complete confidentiality, and an envelope addressed to Analytica was enclosed for their reply. It was felt that had mail been returned to Wordbank, this might have inhibited respondents from making remarks which were critical of the company. We investigated the use of a 'freepost' address so that respondents would not have to pay for postage, but this proved prohibitively expensive, so respondents had to pay for stamps, which might have reduced the response rate somewhat. In the event, only two respondents complained about this. However, a further four returned their questionnaires in the unstamped envelopes.

From the 500 questionnaires circulated, 188 responses were received in time to be included in the survey[1], a response rate of 38 per cent. While we do not have information on characteristics of non-respondents, we have no reason to believe that they differ in any significant way from respondents.

To supplement the information from the postal survey with more qualitative information, it was decided to carry out face-to-face interviews with male and female teleworkers in each of the participating countries. Four interviews were carried out in Britain (one man with children and one without and one woman with children and one without), four in Sweden (two women with very young children and two men with teenage children) and one in the Netherlands (a woman caring for a spouse with a disability).

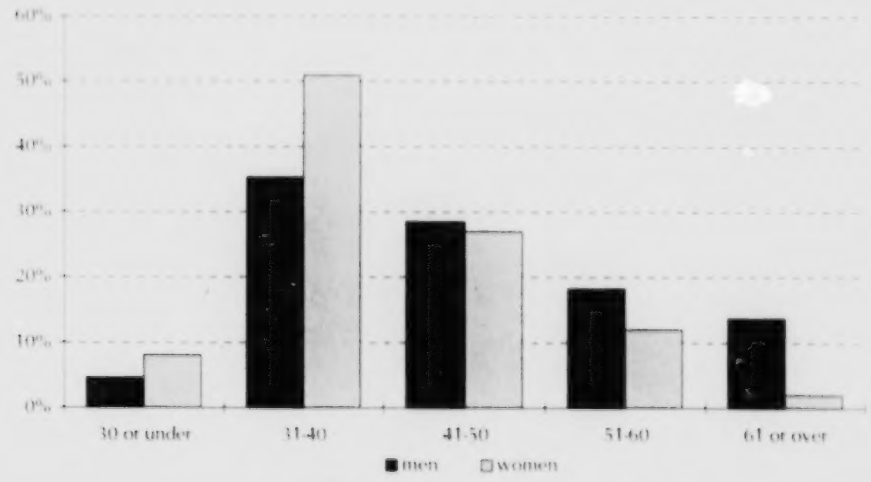
[1] A further four responses were received, all from men, too late to be included.

4. Characteristics of Teleworkers

Slightly more women than men (100, compared with 88) returned a completed questionnaire. This gives us a sufficiently large number of each sex to draw valid comparisons.

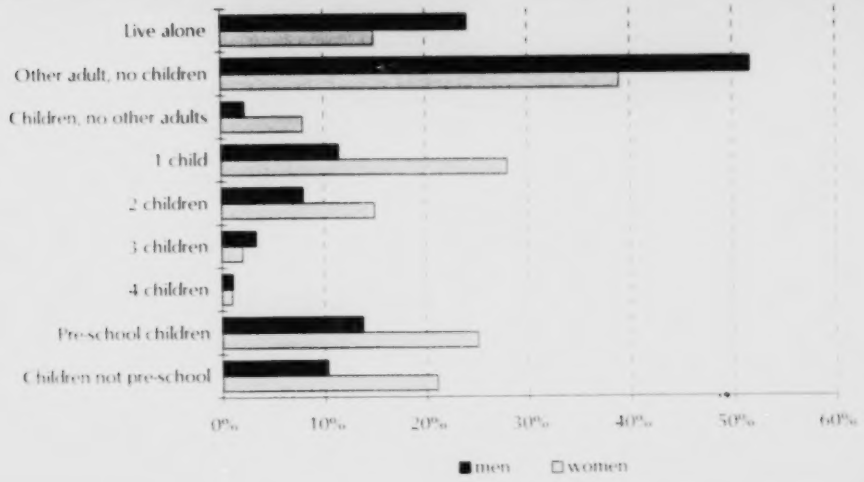
The majority were in their thirties or forties, but 15 per cent were in their 50s. Six per cent were younger, and seven per cent over 60. Figure 4.1 compares the age profile of men and women and demonstrates a slightly younger profile among the women, with a higher percentage in the two youngest age groups and a progressively lower proportion in the older groups. Men make up 86 per cent of the over 60s, despite comprising only 47 per cent of the total sample.

Figure 4.1: Age of respondent, by gender



Source: Analytica, Teleworking in Britain Survey, 1992-93

Figure 4.2: Household structure, by gender of respondent



Source: Analutica, Teleworking in Britain Survey, 1992-93

Just over a third of the translators in the sample had children under 18 in the household. Figure 4.2 shows the number of children by the gender of respondent and demonstrates that women were more likely to be living with children than men. Altogether, there were ten single parents in the survey, of whom two were men. The ages of the children (whether or not they were of preschool age) did not show any significant difference. It should be noted, however, that over half the women in the sample (54 per cent) nevertheless did *not* have children. Childcare problems cannot therefore be seen as a sufficient explanation for choosing to work from home.

The survey also investigated the number of adults in each respondent's household. As Figure 4.2 shows, men were more likely to live alone than women and also more likely to be living with another adult without children. Nevertheless, the differences between the sexes were not enormous.

However, when we looked at the dependent status of the cohabiting adult we found dramatic differences between the sexes. Half the men in the survey said that there was an adult in the household who was financially dependent on them, compared with only 13 per cent of the women. On the face of it, this suggests that these teleworkers replicate the broader

pattern of male breadwinner/female dependent found in other types of employment and cannot, by and large (albeit with some exceptions), be seen as mould breakers in this regard.

We also asked whether any of the other adults in the households were in need of care. This was so in only six cases, four in the households of male teleworkers and two in the households of women. These numbers are too small to infer any general conclusions, other than to discount the need to care for dependent adults as a major reason for working from home in this group.

In fact our face-to-face interviews did include one teleworker, a woman in the Netherlands, who was caring for a disabled spouse at home. Her husband had developed multiple sclerosis and was becoming progressively more dependent on her. Interestingly enough, this teleworker saw homeworking as a permanent solution and said she would not like to go back to an office even if her husband were not dependent on her. She told us that she liked working alone and being independent, doing things her own way.

It is sometimes thought that working from home can provide a means for couples to share the housework more equally between them than is the norm, and we were interested to see whether there were many households in the survey consisting of two or more homeworkers. This was the case in 16 per cent of cases, divided equally between male and female respondents. Only one of these cases involved a third homeworker in the household.

We also asked whether any of the other adults in the household worked outside the home, and here found a relatively high prevalence. Fifty nine per cent of male respondents and 81 per cent of women had a spouse or other household member working outside the home.

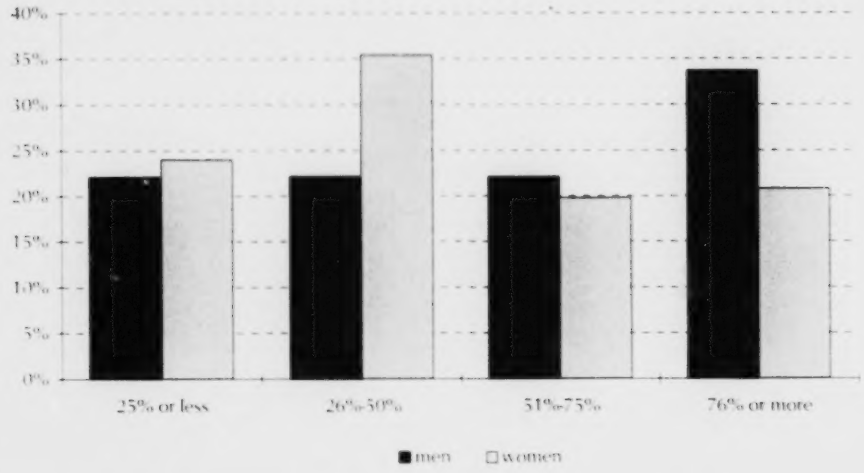
5. Household Roles

Given the picture already established, whereby women are more likely to be secondary earners in the household, the high proportion of women with partners working away from the home is not surprising. However, the proportion of men with partners going out to work is less expected. It seems likely, however, that in a number of these cases the partner in question is a part-time worker whose earnings are not the household's main source of income.

In answer to the question 'Are you the main breadwinner?', over two thirds of the men in the sample (67 per cent) said yes, compared with only 36 per cent of the women. Given that 23 per cent of the women were the only adults in their household, this suggests that only 12 per cent were supporting their partners financially.

In an attempt to quantify the contribution of telework earnings to total household income, we also asked respondents to estimate the percentage of the total made up by their earnings from translation. The results are presented in Figure 5.1 and serve to qualify the picture in an interesting way. They do indeed confirm an overall impression that men contribute more to household earnings than women. But in fact only a third of men (compared with 21 per cent of women) contribute more than three-quarters of household earnings, while the proportion earning between a half and three-quarters is almost the same for both sexes (22 per cent of men, compared with 20 per cent of women). This suggests that the perception of being the 'main breadwinner' may be as much psychological as actual, with male respondents (and perhaps also some women) needing to believe that men are the main breadwinners, even though in actuality women are making a substantial (and often an equal) contribution to the household income. It is indeed possible that part of the unspoken 'gender contract' in these households

Figure 5.1: per cent of household income contributed by telework earnings, by gender of respondent



Source: Analytica, Teleworking in Britain Survey, 1992-93

involves a collusion in reinforcing the man's status as head of the household.

When we investigated national differences, we found that the proportion of men claiming to be the main breadwinner was somewhat higher in the UK (at 71 per cent) and in Eastern Europe (at 75 per cent) than in other EU countries (where it averaged only 41 per cent). For women, there was little difference, the comparable percentages being 37 per cent, 50 per cent and 31 per cent. Small sample sizes in some categories mean that these figures should be treated with some caution.

In our face-to-face interviews we found one male respondent in the UK who cheerfully admitted to being a secondary earner, telling us, 'My wife is in full-time employment, thank God, or we'd be in trouble'.

In the 'male breadwinner/female housewife' model, the other side of this coin is the perception of who does the housework. Here, the results are somewhat more surprising. Sixty two per cent of men say that they do not. Of the remainder, 26 per cent are living in households with no other adults so can be said to have little choice in the matter. This leaves 11 per cent of our

male teleworkers who could be said to have taken on the role of 'househusband' when they chose to work from home.

There were some national differences in relation to this variable. UK residents demonstrated the highest proportion of men (42 per cent) who do housework.

It is important, however, to treat these results with some caution. Men's and women's perceptions of who does what housework are not necessarily shared. This became clear in one of our face-to-face interviews in Sweden. One of the women respondents, the mother of two young boys, said that she has overall responsibility for the housework, taking care of the children as well as cooking, cleaning the house *etc*. She felt that she did it all, but that was not her husband's experience. 'We discussed sharing the work before the children came', she told us, 'but now we have a completely traditional distribution of housework between us'.

The other female respondent in Sweden also felt that she had overall responsibility for household tasks but did receive some help from her husband. 'If I get a big job, as I did last week', she told us, 'he must do most of the cooking and cleaning and there is no discussion about it. It is not negotiable as far as I am concerned'. Her ability to lay down these terms was almost certainly strengthened by the fact that she was the main bread-winner in the household, supporting her husband while he studied.

What is surprising is the relatively high proportion of women respondents — 30 per cent, who claim that they do not do most of the housework in their households. There are two possible explanations for this. Either they are sharing their homes with others who have taken on the main responsibility for housework or they employ domestic servants to do it for them, a possibility which cannot, unfortunately, be checked from these data because, for space reasons, the questionnaire lacked a question on the subject.

Evidence from our face-to-face interviews (although obviously not statistically valid) suggests that there are women in this group with male partners who do the majority of the housework. One, childless, interviewee in the UK told us: 'My partner does eighty per cent of the housework. I do the washing. He does the washing up, vacuum cleaning and cleaning.

We share the cooking and I do the shopping. Basically it's worked out like this because I'm incapable of cleaning; I'm just so bad at it. But we rarely argue about it. Only if he decides to do the washing and mixes the colours with the whites.' While this suggests some genuine sharing, it seems likely on the available evidence that this respondent's estimate that she only does 20 per cent of the housework is rather low.

Another UK respondent, a woman translator with children, who described herself as the main household breadwinner 'at the moment', described a situation in which the housework, although shared by her husband, was clearly a source of stress. 'At the moment a friend comes in during the day and looks after the children. They take care of themselves a lot of the time though they fight quite a lot which can get annoying. We both (my husband and I) do the cooking and there's always takeaways. I do the clothes washing. If I'm busy (my husband) does what needs to be done and vice versa. If we're both busy it just won't get done at all. Sometimes it gets a bit depressing.'

Both our male respondents in Sweden presented themselves as 'modern Swedish men' when it came to childcare and housework. Their situations were similar: both were divorced from their wives, living alone and sharing in the care of a single teenage son (aged 17 and 19 respectively). And both took pride in the fact that they were more involved with childcare and domestic work than earlier generations of men. In both cases, the social gain of spending time with one's children was seen as part of the benefit of teleworking, and both presented themselves as pioneering a new way of working and living and therefore as somewhat deviant. 'Living in a small town like this', one told us, 'makes this free lifestyle more visible than in a big city and people probably think that I have an independent income'. The other lived in a big city but expressed similar feelings of difference from his neighbours. 'I think they probably think I'm a failure and a person who can't earn a living', he said, 'That's a big fear today. Because we live in the final phase of the industrial society and its way of work has been so cemented.'

6. Location

In sampling the Wordbank translators, it was our intention to obtain a sample which was distributed throughout Europe and questionnaires were indeed distributed amongst all the major European language categories. However, Wordbank's lists are compiled on the basis of the language skills of their translators rather than country of residence (itself an indicator of the way

Table 6.1: Breakdown of sample, by country of residence and country of origin

Country	residence (%)	origin (%)
Belgium	0.5	0.5
Britain	64.9	29.2
Denmark	0.5	1.6
France	1.6	7.4
Germany	8.0	12.2
Greece	0.5	1.1
Ireland	0.5	1.1
Italy	8.5	12.2
Luxembourg	1.1	0.0
Netherlands	2.7	2.1
Portugal	0.0	1.6
Spain	4.3	8.5
Sweden	0.5	2.1
Switzerland	0.0	0.5
Eastern Europe	6.4	15.4
Outside Europe	0.0	5.3

Source: Analytica, Teleworking in Britain Survey, 1992-93

in which distance is no longer a constraint in the allocation of work). Since a large number of these translators are not resident in their country of origin, or of language expertise, this created a disparity between the distribution by country of residence and that by country of origin, with a very high proportion of respondents resident in the UK. Table 6.1 shows the breakdown of the sample by country of residence and country of origin. Thus, while UK residents make up nearly two-thirds of the total sample, translators of UK origin form less than one in three.

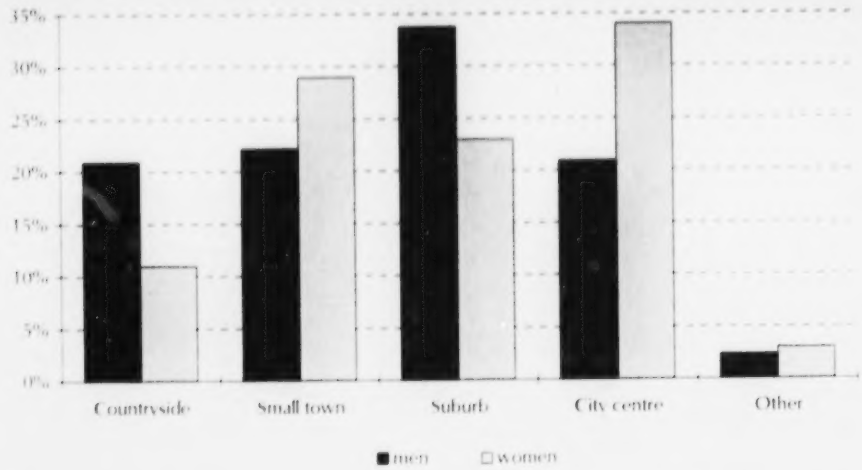
For the purposes of comparative analysis, however, because it is the regulatory climate of the country of residence which determines working conditions, we have in most cases taken the country of residence as the significant variable, aggregating non-British EU responses because in most cases the numbers are not large enough for separate analysis. Although the dispersal of the sample by regulatory climate of local labour market is not as diverse as we would ideally have liked, it is nevertheless highly diverse culturally, with a high proportion of respondents resident outside their country of origin.

The survey included an interesting group of responses from non-EU countries in Eastern Europe — the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria and parts of the former Soviet Union. These were grouped together for analytical purposes.

We were also interested to discover the kind of location in which these translators lived, since it is often argued that this form of home based teleworking is particularly suitable for those living in inaccessible rural areas. In fact, as can be seen from Figure 6.1, the respondents were fairly evenly spread between rural, small town, suburban and city centre locations. However, there were gender differences, with men more likely to live in rural areas and women, somewhat surprisingly, more likely to be living in city centres.

We thought that a possible explanation for these differences might be the presence, or absence, of dependent children, but when we looked at these data more closely, we found that although the men in households with children were slightly more likely to live in the countryside or small towns and somewhat less likely to live in suburbs or city centres than those without children, these differences were not dramatic, while for women the differences were almost nonexistent, never exceeding four percentage points.

Figure 6.1: Location of residence, by gender of respondent



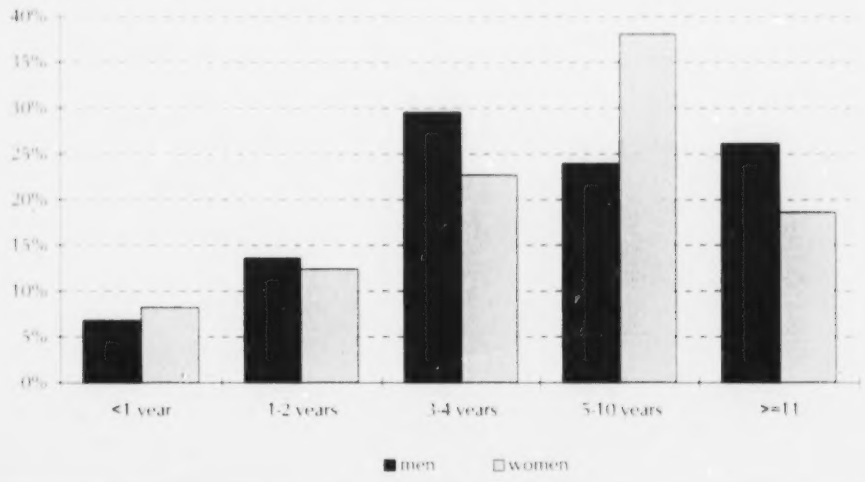
Source: Analytica, Teleworking in Britain Survey, 1992-93

7. Employment History and Teleworking Experience

Virtually all the respondents in the survey had previous experience of working outside the home. Of the nine who had not, three were male and six female.

Most also had substantial experience of working from home, as can be seen from Figure 7.1, which shows that 50 per cent of the men and 56 per cent of the women in the sample had worked in this way for five years or more. The higher proportion of men with over 11 years experience of home based working is consistent with the higher age profile of male respondents. This suggests that teleworking is more than a short-term option for

Figure 7.1: Length of teleworking experience of respondents, by gender



Source: Analytica, Teleworking in Britain Survey, 1992-93

these professional translators and may well represent a permanent career choice. This impression can be fleshed out by reference to the work histories of some of our personal interviewees.

Of the four respondents in Sweden, both the women had made a conscious choice of translation as a career (though not necessarily as a home based career) by acquiring specialist translation qualifications at university. One, a Finnish woman, had worked from home for several years mainly translating technical texts, with some assistance with specialist language from her husband who was a service technician. She had built up a specialist expertise in the terminology of the European Commission and to a large extent translated EC documents.

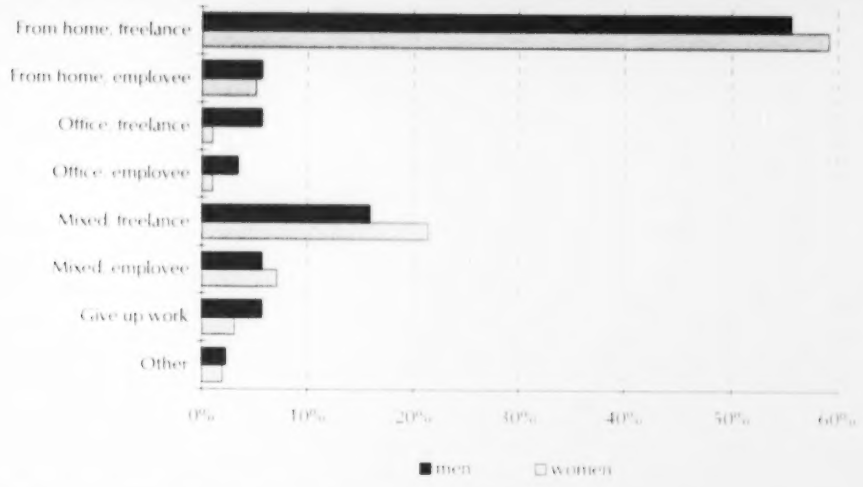
The other woman had been employed by a translation agency for three years. Then she was employed by a marketing company for six years. After a parental leave period she worked for one year, partly in marketing and partly as a self-employed translator. Having done this for a year she decided that the combined workload was too high and became a full-time home based translator. Her experience as a homeworker was comparatively short.

By contrast, both the Swedish men had a technical background and seemed to have drifted into translation rather than consciously choosing it. They were both mainly translating technical material. One of the men had been working from home for 19 years, ever since his children were small, saying that he had chosen to work this way because he felt the need to liberate himself from the large male dominated company he previously worked in. He experienced this male dominance as negative because, as he said, 'it easily gives you negative values and norms, especially against women'.

The other man had taken up teleworking after being made redundant from a large computer company in the early 1990s. He too used ideological rationalisations for his choice, referring, for instance, to the need to 'liberate the man from the tyranny of the organisation'. There may have been an element of *post hoc* rationalisation in such attitudes.

Working from home as a freelance is not necessarily the preferred choice of these respondents. There is evidence that in some cases it is simply seen as the only way in which it is possible to earn one's living as a translator.

Figure 7.2: Employment preference, by gender of respondent



Source: Analytica, Teleworking in Britain Survey, 1992-93

When respondents were asked what would be their ideal way of working given a free choice, only 57 per cent said that this would be their first choice, as can be seen from Figure 7.2.

What is perhaps most striking about these results is the very small difference between the sexes. Women have a slightly greater preference for working partly from home and partly from an office (described as 'mixed' in Figure 7.2) while men have a slightly greater preference for working full time from an office. However, in general there is a consistent pattern whereby slightly over half see this form of work as their preferred option, while a significant minority (43 per cent) would prefer to be working in some other way. This is consistent with the findings of other surveys. In a survey of (mainly female) teleworkers mostly involved in computer programming carried out in 1981 by the author, for instance, 35 per cent stated a clear preference for working from home, 24 per cent would have preferred to work elsewhere and 22 per cent gave qualified responses (Huws, 1984, p. 44). The National Group on Homeworking survey of traditional homeworkers found 44 per cent preferring to work from home, 52 per cent preferring to work elsewhere and the remainder undecided (Huws, 1994, p. 9).

The face-to-face interviews carried out with women in Sweden gave particularly striking evidence of the way in which some teleworkers view their situation as a temporary expedient.

One respondent was quite explicit that being fully home based is a temporary solution for her, 'because you become socially too isolated', she explained. 'To carry out my work I don't have to take one step outside the apartment if I don't want to.' Nevertheless, she continued, 'this is a good solution for me now when the children are small and still attending the local nursery and for some more years, but I know that I don't want to work on my own for the rest of my life. One solution would be to hire an office together with other self-employed translators. I think that it will be lonely in the long run to work on your own and it is very useful too, to have colleagues doing the same thing around you.'

The other woman we interviewed in Sweden felt that her ideal would be to have a combination of a home based workplace and a workplace outside the home where it is possible to meet colleagues.

This can be contrasted with one of the male interviewees in Sweden whose solution to having to spend too much time cooped in the home was to spend more time working on his boat, an option which new technology was making much more feasible than in the past.

In these Swedish interviews, there was a gender difference in the problem to which the home based self-employment situation is a solution. For the men, the home based self-employed work situation was experienced as an answer to an outspoken need to 'liberate' them from the organisational constraints of big companies and presented as a long-term solution. The women stressed very clearly that this home based work situation corresponded to a phase in their lives when they had small children and was only a short-term measure. The social isolation in the home based working situation was seen as a major disadvantage by them. In the long run the women wanted to have colleagues around. Neither of the men felt socially isolated by working at home.

We should beware of seeing these cases as necessarily representative of all women, or all men, however. The Dutch and British interviews gave us examples both of a man who

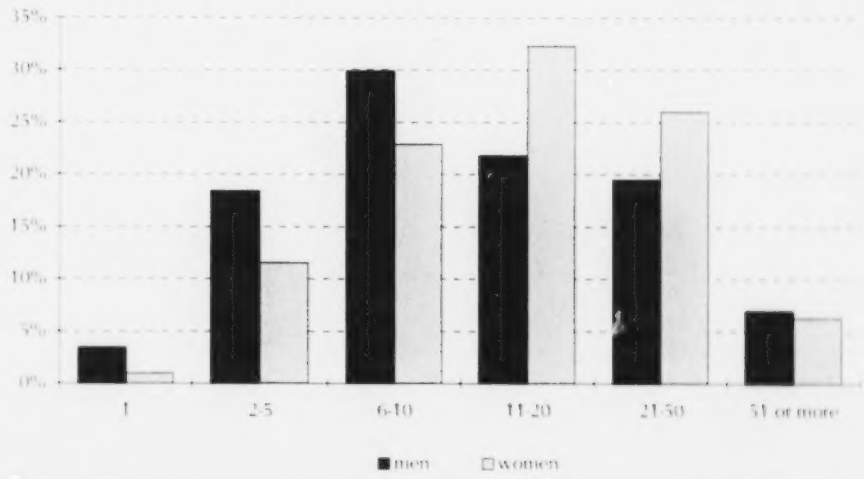
would have preferred not to be working from home and of women who saw home based working as a long-term solution.

Given the widespread belief among employers that the desire to work from home is specific to women, the findings from the postal survey are important, suggesting that the preference for working in this way is distributed fairly equally between the sexes.

The preference for self-employment (or freelance working) over employee status must be seen in the context of existing employment practices in this sector. The majority of these respondents work for a large number of different clients, as can be seen from Figure 7.3, which shows the number of employers worked for in the last year. A comparison between the sexes indicates that women are likely to work for even more clients than their male colleagues. Whether this is an indicator of greater success or of greater insecurity is impossible to determine on the basis of these figures alone.

Respondents were also asked whether, apart from Wordbank, their clients mainly consisted of other translation agencies or clients they worked for directly, and which type of client they preferred working for. Here there were no significant differences

Figure 7.3: Number of employers in past year, by gender of respondent



Source: Analutica, Teleworking in Britain Survey, 1992-93

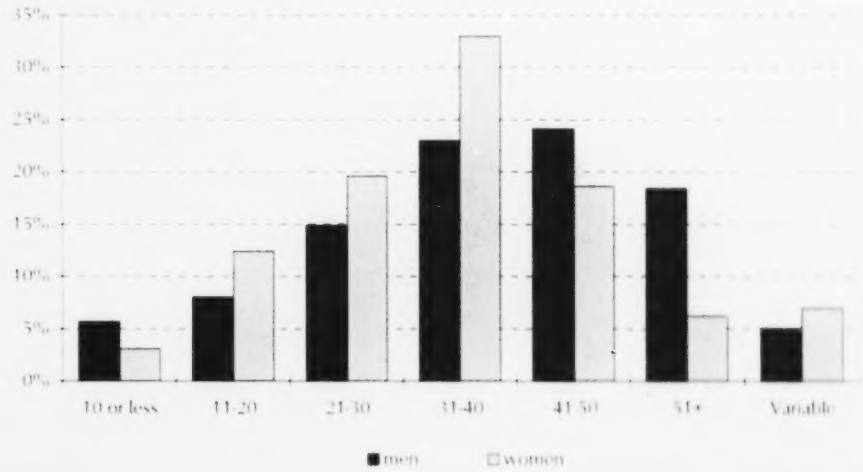
between the sexes. Thirty six per cent of the sample worked mainly for other translation agencies (with 32 per cent saying this was their preferred method) while 19 per cent worked directly for clients (with 51 per cent stating that this was their preference). The remainder worked for a mixture of the two, which was also the preferred option for ten per cent of the sample.

8. Working Conditions

8.1 Hours

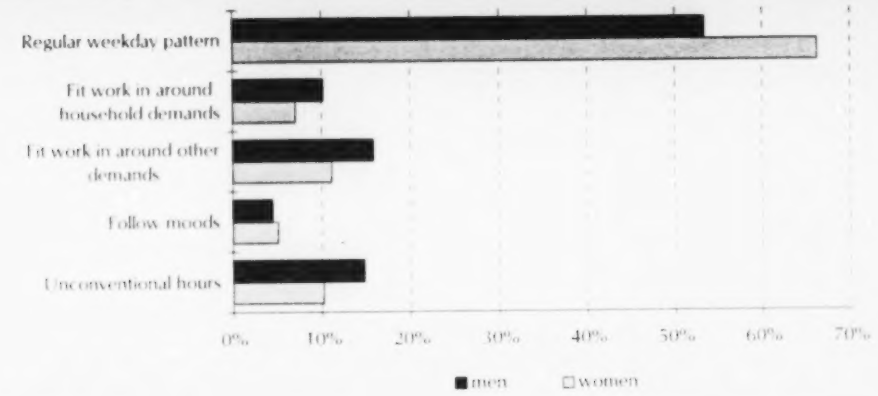
Teleworking is often seen as a part-time option and, given the high percentage (46 per cent) of respondents who did not see themselves as their household's primary breadwinner, it might be expected that the average number of hours worked weekly would be fairly low. In fact, the majority of these teleworkers worked extremely long hours, as can be seen from Figure 8.1. Only nine per cent worked fewer than 20 hours per week, with 22 per cent working fewer than 30 hours and 44 per cent fewer than 40 hours. The remainder said that they worked more than 40 hours in a typical week, with 20 per cent working 50 or more, 12 per cent 60 or more and nine per cent 70 or more!

Figure 8.1: Number of hours worked per week, by gender of respondent



Source: Analytica, Teleworking in Britain Survey, 1992-93

Figure 8.2: Working patterns, by gender of respondent



Source: Analytica, Teleworking in Britain Survey, 1992-93

Figure 8.2 compares the working hours of men and of women. As might be expected, this shows higher proportions of men working very long hours and higher proportions of women working short hours, except in the very lowest category. However, there are significant numbers both of men working part time and of women working very long hours and the overall impression is certainly not one of a simple pattern whereby men are full-time workers while women work part time. Rather, it is one of diversity for both sexes with considerable overlap between male and female working patterns. Perhaps the most distinctive feature of this chart is the greater clustering of women in the 31 to 40 hour bracket — the one which approximates most closely to a 'normal' office week.

When we asked respondents how they organised their working hours, a majority of both sexes stated that they tried to follow a regular pattern of working hours every weekday. However, the proportion was higher among women, which reinforces a view that women are more likely to be trying to recreate the time structure of office work within their homes, perhaps because they are more likely to need to fit in with externally imposed timetables like school hours. Figure 8.2 summarises the responses to this question by gender.

One of the most surprising features of this chart is the very small number of women claiming that they fit work in around household demands. Indeed, there are more men than women

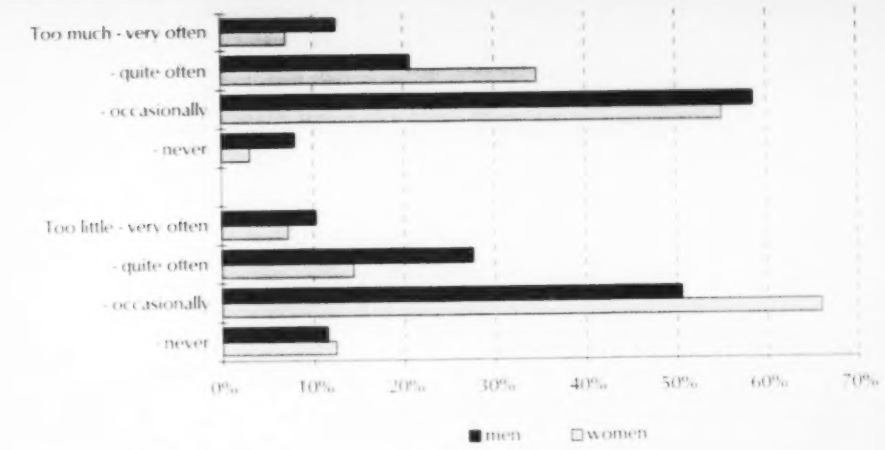
in this category, which seems to include the minority of 'house-husbands' in the sample identified earlier. Another possible explanation is that some respondents perceive the way in which they integrate paid work with housework not so much as fitting work in with household demands as fitting household demands in with work.

The most likely explanation for this would seem to be that translation work is simply too demanding to be carried out easily when children are in the house, and must normally be fitted in to the hours when they are out. This was illustrated in one of our face-to-face interviews by a man who was taking primary responsibility for childcare in his household:

> *'I only work when the children are out. It's impossible to work when they are in . . . . I don't work at weekends. I used to but with two children it's impossible. I work from 9 or 9.30 till 5. At 5 I have to do some tidying up before the others get back. I never work in the evenings. I'm too tired and the quality of work drops . . . . When I'm busy I work three days a week. If I get busier the youngest could go to nursery school five days a week instead of three. Before he was born I worked every day . . . . (The children) come first, unfortunately, and then I get into trouble with work and deadlines. In order to make more money I would have to work more hours, but I can't work at weekends or after 5 o'clock. Three weekends ago I did do some work but it was very difficult. I could tell my wife resented it, and there was a lot of noise. So I decided it wasn't worth it'.*

One of the women we interviewed in Sweden told us: 'When I work I don't think about the household work because there is no alternative. I have to meet the deadlines for the jobs. It is only when the deadlines are vague that the household work tends to increase too much,' although it is clear that the same woman is fitting in different household tasks such as cleaning, washing up *etc.* when she is having breaks from her paid work. 'When I am thinking about a problem I might as well put the laundry in the washing machine', she said, 'and during the next break take it out. It is more convenient this way because before when I was not working at home I still had to do it, but then at 11 o'clock in the evening.' None of the women appeared to feel particularly stressed by the housewife ideal they have been brought up with. They were not trying to meet their mother's standards of housework, and allowed themselves when necessary to have a high tolerance level for a relatively messy home.

Figure 8.3: Frequency of periods with too much/ little work, by gender of respondent



Source: Analytica, Teleworking in Britain Survey, 1992-93

At the other extreme we find another interviewee (male, but living alone) who suffers from insomnia. He told us: 'I work at any time. If I can't sleep properly I might get up at 5 in the morning and work. I tend to work better in the evening, and I often work until 11 pm, and sometimes overnight. Because I sleep badly it's hard to work to a routine. With homework I can work when I want.'

Despite their attempts to control the pattern of work, most of these teleworkers are in the hands of their employers when it comes to determining the flow of work. Figure 8.3 shows the frequency of periods with too much, too little and no work for both sexes in the sample. As can be seen, only a small minority never have too much work, or too little. A third of men and 40 per cent of women have too much work very often or quite often, and the great majority do so occasionally. The distribution of too little work is similar, although this is a problem about which men are somewhat more likely to complain than women.

Our direct interviews provided abundant evidence of the stress created by too much work. One female respondent in the UK described the health effects: 'back pains, neck pains, and that computer feeling after 12 hours in front of a screen. It's hard to describe; you feel detached, dizzy and a bit confused.' Another teleworker (also British) compared his home based work with a previous office based translation job: 'There was a lot of long

term work which wasn't urgent . . . . Now everything is short term. The rhythm of the work is almost completely out of my hands.'

Reactions to these fluctuations in workflow can be more ambivalent. One respondent told us that the week before the interview she had had a huge quantity of work to do, but the week she was interviewed she had very little work. She enjoyed not having to work very much when she had delivered a big job: 'If there is no work coming in the beginning of next week I will get a little nervous', she said. 'When there is work to do, the customers often require it to be done as soon as possible and the deadlines are very tight. From the customer's perspective there is very little planning and the possibility to control the work-flow is very low for the translators.'

Both the women interviewed in Sweden felt that they were often stressed when they were working and that this stress affected their families. It is evident that for the two women the absence of the children from home governed their working hours. To combine paid work and taking care of the children at the same time was not seen by them as a good solution, and they both tried to avoid that situation.

The irregularity of the workflow is experienced very differently, depending on whether there is enough work to do or not. The free time in between two jobs can only be enjoyed fully if you know there is another job coming within a week or two at most, or if you have a sufficient economic buffer to permit periods without work. Otherwise it is only experienced as stressful and a source of economic insecurity. Freedom and insecurity are experienced as inseparably linked, like opposite sides of a coin. This is of course a condition these teleworking translators have in common with other self-employed groups.

Another factor affecting attitudes to fluctuating workflow is the extent to which the teleworker is dependent on the income for survival. Our Dutch respondent, who had another source of income through her disabled husband, told us that on average she worked only ten to twenty hours a week, but that the workload fluctuated very much, in a rhythm she did not control. Sometimes there was a lot of work; sometimes none, the latter fortunately not often. If there was no work she would try to find new contacts, new target groups, for instance through a new mailing; but it was not really a source of stress. She had a

down period in the spring and summer (she heard that many translators were experiencing that) but she did not really mind. The weather was nice and she had worked in the garden. It helped that she was not financially dependent on her work. The down period was now past and there was enough work. If she had a lot of work it did affect her relationships with others, including her husband, but, she told us, he did not mind. There was little stress in the work. Sometimes the deadlines were tight but she could work fast and get things done; the deadlines were never impossible. Sometimes she could not achieve the number of hours she wanted to, but this did not happen often. She worked for different agencies and sometimes took on a heavy workload, because she did not want to refuse work too often. If she had taken on too much she had two fellow translators she sometimes turned to for support. They did the same if they had too much work.

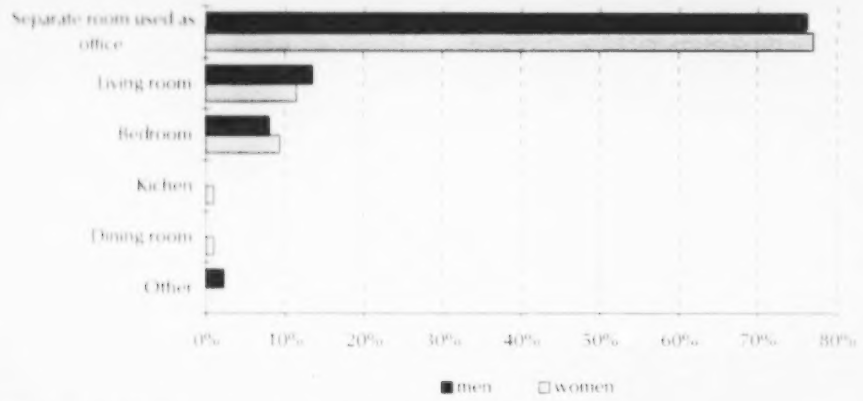
In addition to periods when there was insufficient work, two-thirds of both male and female respondents experienced periods when there was no work at all. For about half the sample (50 per cent of men and 54 per cent of women), these were occasional, but in four to five per cent of cases they were 'very often' and in the remainder 'quite often'.

These periods varied from a week to four or more months, with no less than 46 per cent of men and 44 per cent of women (excluding those who never experienced periods without work) undergoing periods of between a fortnight and three months without work. This indicates a very high level of insecurity among these teleworkers and leads to financial hardship in a large number of cases — 30 per cent of men and 39 per cent of women. It is interesting that, despite their greater likelihood of being economically dependent, women are nevertheless more likely to suffer hardship as a result of the precariousness of their employment.

8.2 Integration/separation of work and household life

The literature on gender and teleworking suggests that in general women are much more likely to experience stress as a result of the intrusion of household activities into work and *vice versa*. One obvious indicator of separation is the existence of a separate room in which to work. We therefore asked all the translators in the Wordbank survey in which room they worked,

Figure 8.4: Room in which teleworking is carried out, by gender of respondent



Source: Analytica, Teleworking in Britain Survey, 1992-93

and the results are summarised in Figure 8.4. These indicate virtually no gender difference in the place of work. Over three-quarters of each gender have a separate room in which to work, with a slightly higher proportion of women in this position. There are also similar proportions of men and women using bedrooms and living rooms. While we did not find any men using kitchens or dining rooms, there were only two women who did so, with two men using 'other' rooms.

This suggests that the gender differences found in other surveys are more likely to reflect occupational differences, and result from the higher proportion of women in low skill, low paid jobs, than to result from any intrinsic differences between men and women. Nevertheless, the Swedish interviews revealed traditionally expected gender differences. Neither of the two women had a room of her own for work. They used respectively a part of the kitchen and a part of the bedroom for this. Both the men, however, had a separate room (and one also had a boat) for their work. This difference could have been due to the differences in life phases between the women and men who were interviewed, and they cannot be regarded as definitive. However, it is consistent with other research carried out in Sweden on home based workers. Kerstin Hytter found that even if women homeworkers lived in detached houses with a lot of space they didn't necessarily have a working room of their own (Hytter, 1994).

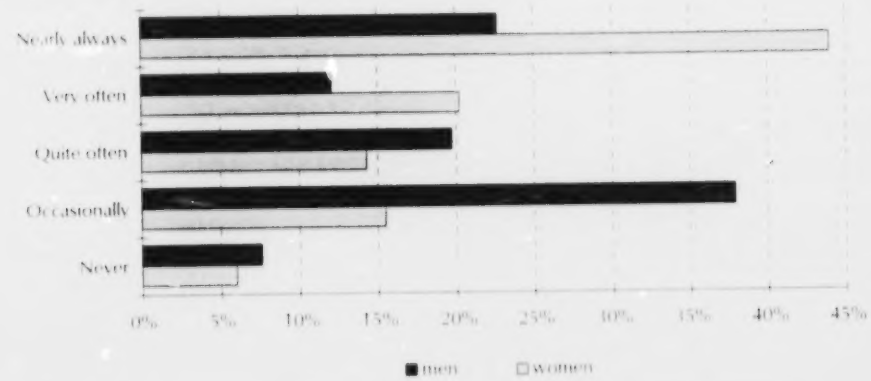
By contrast, the woman we interviewed in the Netherlands had her own large study at the top floor of the house, with enough room for two desks, two PCs, filing cabinets and other equipment. Our two female interviewees in the UK also had their own workrooms.

The availability of a separate room is clearly closely linked to income level in most countries and most types of location, and must therefore be understood as a class difference. These translators, albeit insecurely employed and suffering from periodic financial hardship, must be regarded, in the main, as middle class.

The nature of translation work is also demanding, requiring considerable concentration. It could be argued that for many a separate room might be regarded as a necessary precondition for taking on this type of work, becoming, in effect, an essential 'tool of the trade' in the same category as items like a computer, a modem or a dictionary. The need for a separate room is therefore closely linked to the need to concentrate. To investigate this further we asked respondents whether they were normally alone when working. Here, as can be seen from Figure 8.5, we found marked differences by gender, even when we had excluded from the analysis all those who lived alone.

Women are nearly twice as likely to work alone 'nearly always' and also considerably more likely to do so 'very often'. Men, on the other hand, appear to take a more relaxed attitude to the

Figure 8.5: Whether/when working, by gender, of respondents not living alone



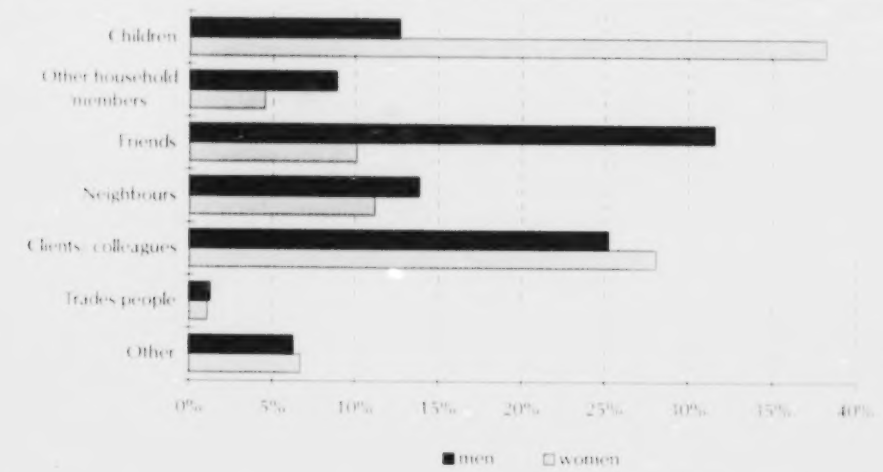
Source: Analytica, Teleworking in Britain Survey, 1992-93

presence of others, being much more likely to work alone 'occasionally' and somewhat more likely to do so 'quite often'. This pattern is consistent with the pattern, identified above, whereby women are more likely to structure their working hours within a 'normal' office day, and work only when their children are not present.

We may surmise that women might also be less able to resist interruption than men, being more likely to be regarded by their families as 'available' when they are physically in the same room. This was illustrated by one of our female respondents who told us: 'Most of the time I am on my own when I am working. I want to be with the children when they are home and they also want me to be with them. I don't even want to start work when they are around because they come to me first, and if I'm working then I get irritated by their interruptions. So I try to avoid that situation.'

Further light is shed on this question by the results of a series of questions concerning interruptions to work. Here too we found significant gender differences, as can be seen from Figure 8.6 which summarises the main sources of interruption. This indicates that women are more than three times as likely as men to be interrupted by children, while men are three times as likely as women to be interrupted by friends.

Figure 8.6: Main source of interruptions, by gender of respondent



Source: Analytica, Teleworking in Britain Survey, 1992-93

This supports the proposition that it is women who are most likely to be called on by children to satisfy their needs, and explains why women are more likely to have to erect barriers in order to be able to work undisturbed. These results might also be interpreted as indicating that men have more leisure for social life. However, they may simply indicate that men are less inclined toward (or less adept at) giving clear signals to other adults that they are not to be disturbed.

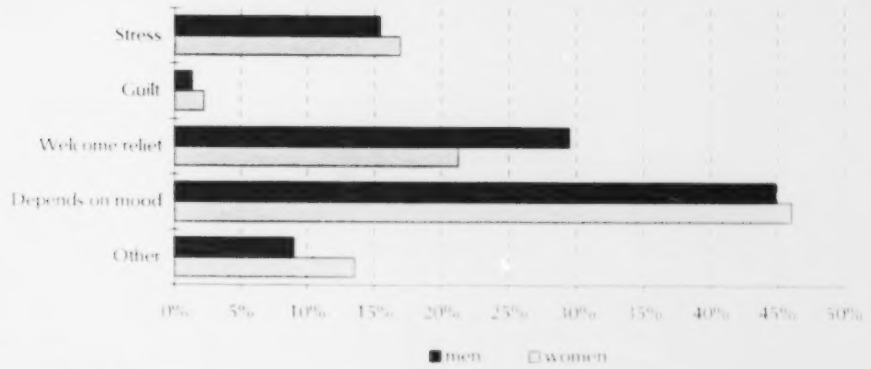
It would be inaccurate, however, to interpret these results as indicating a simple polarisation between leisured men and women pressed by the demands of their children. There is clearly considerable overlap between the groups. Indeed, it could be argued that being at home all day does appear to break down some of the demarcations between traditionally male and traditionally female roles within the local community. One of our personal interviewees, for instance, a man living alone, informed us that he was frequently asked by his neighbours to collect their child from school when they were unable to do so.

Responses to being interrupted appeared somewhat ambiguous, as illustrated by one of our personal interviewees (a childless woman, the main breadwinner, living with her partner) who said that: 'If I've got a lot of work it makes me short-tempered; at other times it's quite nice because you're quite isolated in this job and it's nice to have a chat and get to know the clients.'

The reactions to being interrupted among the participants in our postal survey are summarised in Figure 8.7. It can be seen that, although the sources of interruption may be different, the reactions to them are remarkably similar between men and women. The largest group (35 per cent of men and 41 per cent of women) share the ambivalence of this interviewee, saying that their reaction depends on their mood, or how busy they are. Between 12 per cent and 15 per cent resent interruptions, saying that they are a source of stress, making it hard to concentrate and do their work properly. This group is outnumbered, however, by the 21 to 30 per cent who welcome interruptions as source of social interaction and relief from boredom.

Only a very small percentage of either sex agreed with the view expressed by some traditional homeworkers in the NGH survey that interruptions serve as a reminder that they are neglecting personal relationships and produce feelings of guilt. This may be because the vast majority of these Wordbank teleworkers had

Figure 8.7: Feelings about being interrupted, by gender of respondent



Source: Analutica, Teleworking in Britain Survey, 1992-93

made satisfactory childcare arrangements and were not working in the presence of children. It may also, of course, result in part from the fact that this was a postal questionnaire. In the more intimate situation of a face-to-face interview (the method used in the NGH survey) it is possible that respondents might be more likely to admit to such feelings.

Some other aspects of the interaction between work and family life emerged from the responses to questions about the advantages and disadvantages of teleworking. These are discussed in Chapter 12.

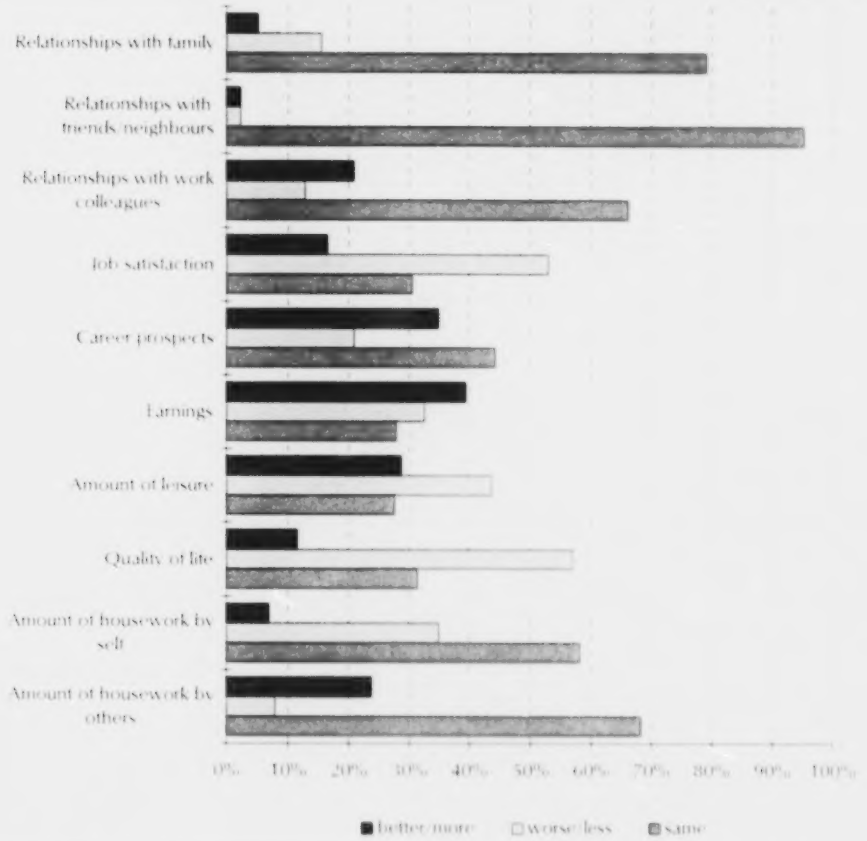
9. Comparisons Between Teleworking and On-site Working

We have already noted that a majority of the teleworkers in this survey stated a clear preference for working from home as a freelance, although a significant minority would ideally prefer to work from an office or to combine partial homeworking with external work. These preferences must have been arrived at as the result of a complex process of weighing up the pros and cons of being based at home. Some of these issues are discussed below in the context of 'advantages and disadvantages'. However, because this information was derived from open-ended questions it does not provide us with a basis for rigorous comparative analysis.

In order to gain some general insight into the factors which might have influenced this preference, we asked a series of questions which invited respondents to compare their current situation with work in an outside office. Because virtually all had direct experience of working outside the home, these comparisons are likely to be based on first-hand experience, rather than speculation, and are thus of considerable interest for the purposes of examining the exact nature of the trade-off. Figures 9.1 and 9.2 summarise these responses for men and for women respectively.

The most striking feature of these results, once again, is the extraordinary similarity between the male and female responses. The main difference is a greater concern among women with relationships with other family members. Women are not only more likely to believe that these would suffer if they did not work at home, they are also more likely than men to believe that their quality of life would deteriorate and their leisure time would be reduced. However, these differences are not dramatic.

Figure 9.1: Men's opinions about how situation would be different if they worked away from home

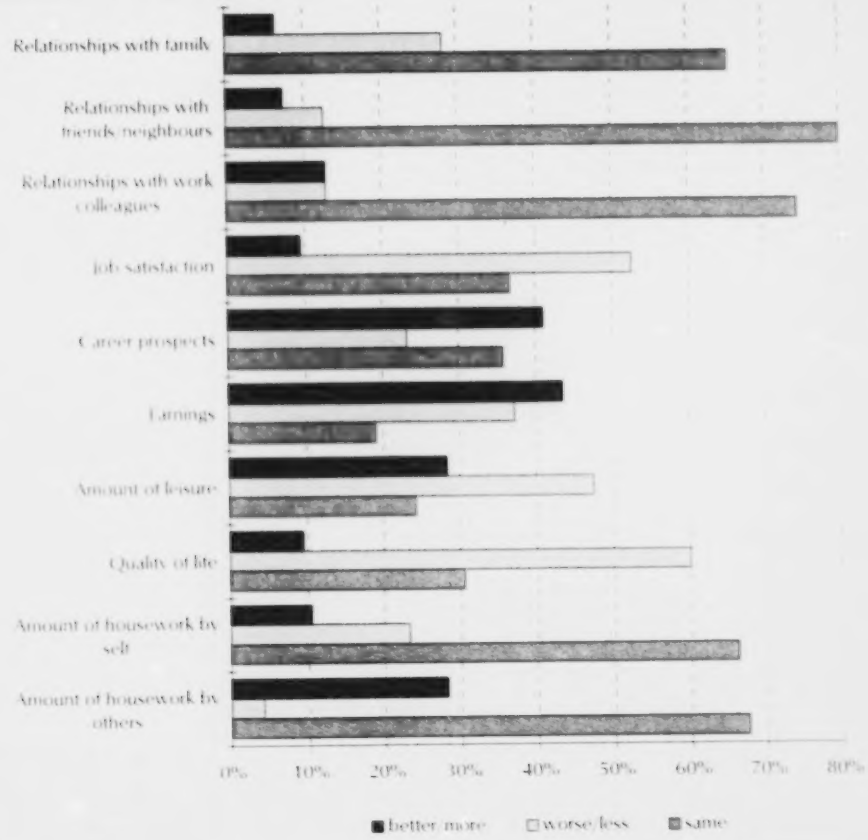


Source: Analytica, Teleworking in Britain Survey, 1992-93

For both men and women, there are four aspects of their lives in which the location of work would appear to make the most difference — in other words, where the numbers answering 'no change' did not exceed those who believed the change would produce either negative or positive effects. These are earnings, leisure, quality of life, and, to a lesser extent, career prospects. It seems likely that these four factors are all given serious attention when making the decision whether or not to work from home.

On the question of earnings, 40 per cent of men and 44 per cent of women believed that they would be better off if they did not

Figure 9.2: Women's opinions about how situation would be different if they worked away from home



Source: Analytica, Teleworking in Britain Survey, 1992-93

work from home. In some cases, a conscious sacrifice may have been made in exchange for other benefits. In others, home working may have been the only form of employment available.

Qualitative information from our interviews supported the impression that translation work is relatively modestly paid. In Sweden, as elsewhere, it is normally paid by results and the pay has been the same for many years. Both the women we interviewed in Sweden thought that in general the pay was too low in relation to the work and the necessary skills. There was also a lack of differentiation between various types of work. One

of the male respondents told us that his income had dropped considerably since he ceased working for the computer company. He thought, however, that this decrease in income was compensated for by having a healthier and more free lifestyle.

The other man, with longer experience as a teleworker, thought that his income was comparable to that of his former colleagues in civil engineering. However, he also drew our attention to the developing trend of increasing the number of tasks involved in translation work:

> *'Today, you are often expected to do more than the pure translation work, for example formatting and converting texts, inserting pictures and other desktop publishing tasks. The use of computers has allowed other tasks to slip into translation work — tasks that you are not paid for.'*

Our Dutch respondent also reported very low pay. She told us:

> *'Translating is not my main source of income. It would be hard to live on it. The rates are quite low. The official rate, advised by the Dutch Society of Translators is 40 cents a word, but most agencies pay 20. My private clients pay 30. However, I am a fast worker and can reach a speed of 500 words an hour. When I was a secretary I learned how to type fast and this helps. Because I am freelance I am not entitled to any benefits. It is possible to get an insurance to cover sickness etc., but I did not take it because we still have my husband's income and the insurance is very expensive.'*

The data from other parts of the survey give us the possibility of testing the importance of pay to these teleworkers. In a series of questions about what factors were important in deciding whether or not to accept any given piece of work, respondents were asked to rate the importance of the rate of pay. Here too, there were few significant differences between men and women, with 51 per cent of women and 50 per cent of men saying that pay rates were 'very important' and 45 per cent of women and 37 per cent of men regarding them as 'quite important'.

This information must be kept in perspective, however. These teleworkers who thought their earning power was reduced by being at home were almost matched by the 28 per cent of men and 35 per cent of women who thought they would be earning less if they went out to work.

On the question of career prospects, the relationship between positive and negative responses is somewhat less ambiguous, with 35 per cent of men and 41 per cent of women believing that they would be better in an outside workplace, compared with 21 per cent of men and 23 per cent of women who think they would be worse.

On the quality of life and leisure variables, the relationship is reversed, with those who believe they are enhanced by working from home clearly outnumbering those who think the opposite. We could thus say that, on balance, when they choose to work from home, teleworkers are sacrificing high earnings and promotion prospects, and taking on extra housework responsibilities in order to gain a better quality of life, more leisure and, at least in the case of women, better relationships with their families. There are clearly many exceptions to this rule, however, and the decision obviously varies according to a wide range of different variables in the circumstances of the teleworker. It must be emphasised that these data give us no grounds for asserting that the gender of the teleworker, in and of itself, constitutes such a variable.

The complexity of these questions can be illustrated by the responses of our respondent who was caring for her disabled husband. For her, teleworking was clearly seen not so much as an alternative to office based work but as an alternative to no work at all. As such, it had clearly contributed to her self-esteem by giving her a sense of her own ability to earn an independent income. She told us that she had never done translating work from an office and could only compare teleworking as a translator with her former jobs as a secretary to which she greatly preferred it, saying that 'translating offers more perspective'. Her teleworking had changed her relationship with her husband, and would have even if he had not become ill. She felt that at least in some ways she was now more financially independent and she was also intellectually stimulated, and this made the relationship more equal. She mentioned that when she was young she did not get much education, because she was 'just a girl' and would marry. The studies she had done and her work as a translator made her feel that she had 'shown them' that they were wrong.

10. Personal Qualities and Skills

10.1 Personal qualities

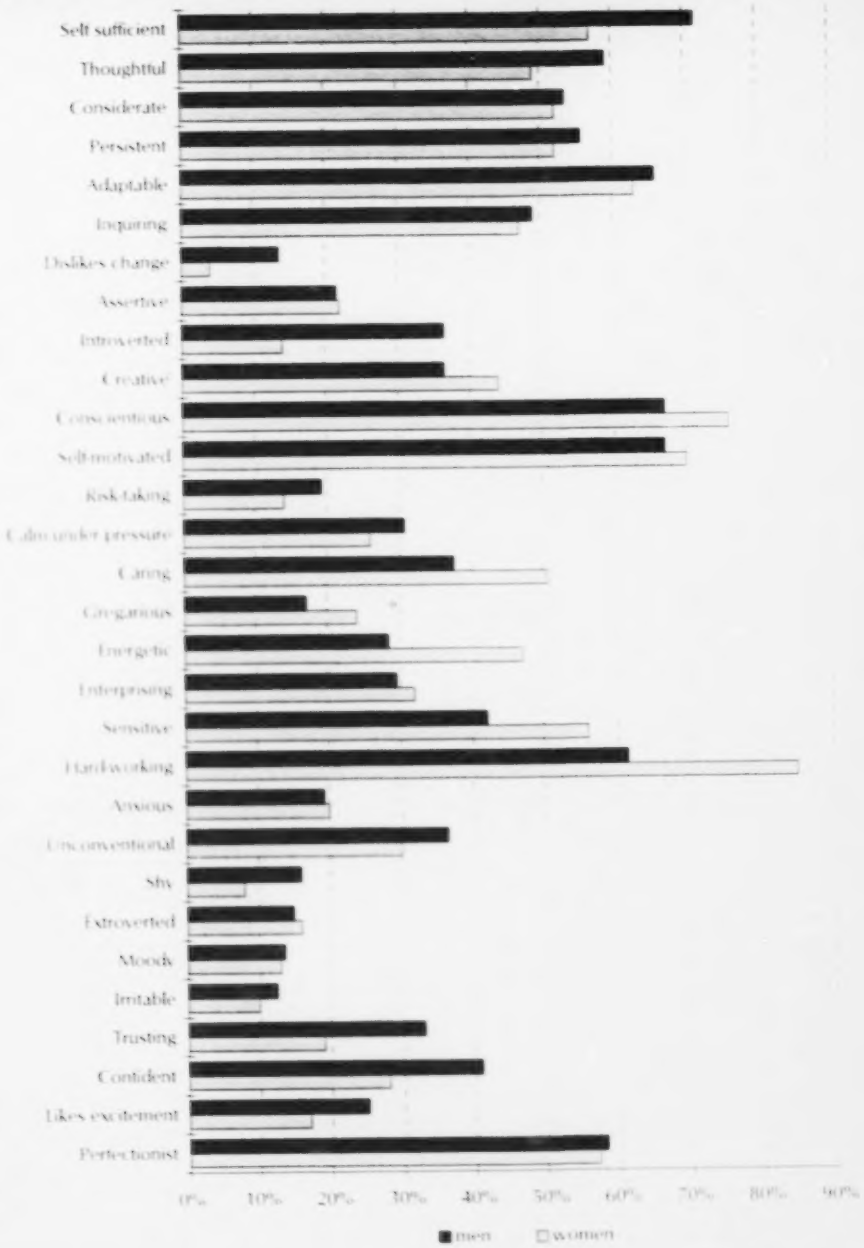
It is often argued that teleworking is suitable only for certain personality types. In a survey of managers of teleworkers carried out by Analytica in 1992-93, for instance, 80 per cent stated that teleworking was not suitable for all types of people. When asked to elaborate on this opinion, the qualities which they cited as necessary included 'self-confidence', 'self-discipline', 'does not need company', 'mature' and 'not easily distracted' (Huws, 1993, pp. 29-30). Some authorities have gone so far as to suggest that employers should administer psychometric tests to their staff to identify potential teleworkers (Judkins *et al.*, 1985).

We therefore thought it might be interesting to include some questions about personality in our questionnaire, in order to see whether any distinctive profile emerged, and how, if at all, this varied by gender (Figure 10.1). Once again, there is a remarkable similarity between the male and female profiles.

There is tendency for slightly more men to rate most qualities highly, a difference which is particularly striking in their self-ratings for self-sufficiency, thoughtfulness, dislike of change, shyness, trustingness, confidence and liking excitement. Women, on the other hand, are more likely to consider themselves conscientious, hard-working, energetic, creative, sensitive and caring. We must emphasise, however, that the similarities between the sexes far outweigh these differences.

Self-sufficiency, self-motivation, hard work and adaptability (qualities generally seen as appropriate for teleworking) are all rated highly, typically by around 70 per cent of respondents. Perfectionism is also rated highly — a quality particularly valued in the publishing industry where most of these teleworkers work.

Figure 10.1: Personal qualities, by gender



Source: Analytica, Teleworking in Britain Survey, 1992-93

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Although the questionnaires were processed in confidence, it is possible that some of these respondents may, consciously or unconsciously, have been trying to 'sell' themselves to Wordbank when filling in this section of the questionnaire, which might have been perceived as rather like a job application form. Certainly, one respondent wrote in additional qualities when completing this section of the questionnaire, while three others sent accompanying letters addressed to Wordbank. This might have led to a tendency to overrate the qualities seen as most desirable by the employer. Even if this is the case, of course, it still provides us with valuable information about teleworkers' perceptions of the qualities most valued by their clients.

In fact, the degree of variation between the ratings for the different qualities suggests that serious thought went into completing the questionnaire in most cases, and this is unlikely to have been an important factor.

10.2 Social skills

In addition to this exercise in self-assessment, respondents were also asked what social skills they thought were necessary to work from home. This was an open-ended question and respondents were free to state as many, or as few, skills as they wished. The results are presented in Figure 10.2.

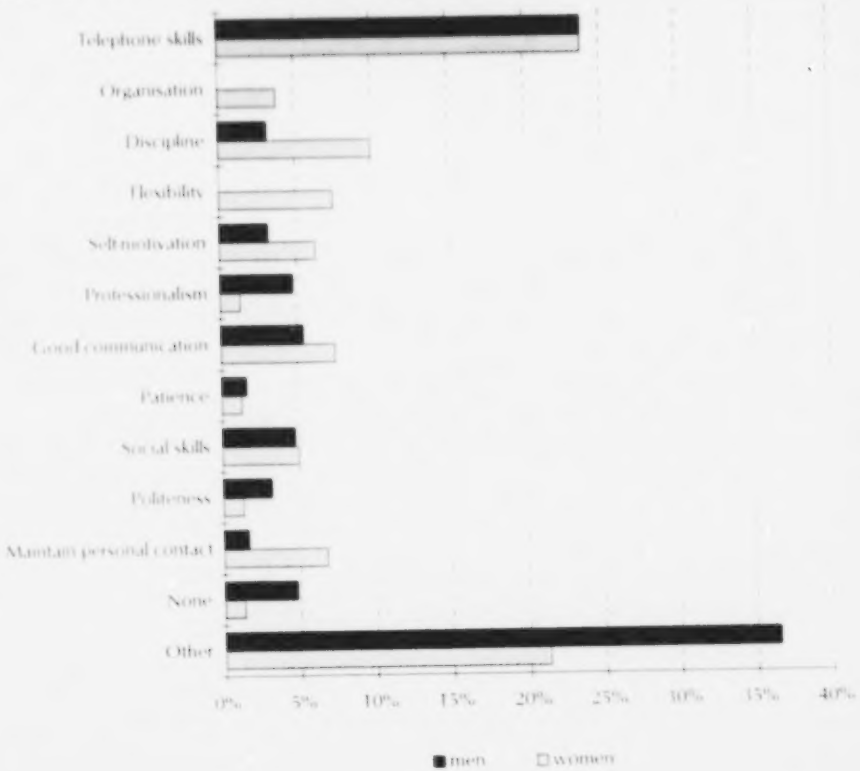
By far the most important skill, mentioned by 24 per cent each of men and women, was a good communications manner. A number of women also mention being well-organised and flexible. Women were also more likely than men to mention self-discipline, good communications and maintaining personal contact with clients. Men, on the other hand, were more likely to mention professionalism.

Here too, however, the broad picture is one of men and women in the same occupational group, operating in the same labour market with very little evidence of gender typing.

10.3 Other skills

In addition to the generic social skills relating to teleworking, we were also interested to identify other skills which these teleworkers might think they needed. A series of questions designed to identify training needs was therefore included in

Figure 10.2: Social skills needed for teleworking, by gender



Source: Analytica, Teleworking in Britain Survey, 1992-93

the questionnaire. The responses to these questions represent perhaps the most dramatic findings of this survey.

The positive response to the question: 'If you had the chance, would you like any further training?' was overwhelming. No less than 95 per cent of women respondents and 69 per cent of male respondents said that they would like such training. In fact, when further questions were asked about specific forms of training, some respondents who had answered 'no' to this question nevertheless expressed interest, as can be seen from Tables 10.1 and 10.2.

Indeed, when asked to tick which forms of training they were interested in from a pre-coded list, not a single woman and only

Table 10.1: Interest in training, by gender, per cent of cases

	men	women
New software	52	45
Improve existing software skills	47	42
Improve existing language skills	36	64
Develop new language skills	13	10
Proof reading/editorial skills	27	12
Design/desktop publishing	45	14
Time management	16	10
Business skills	25	19
None	13	0

Source: Analytica, Teleworking in Britain Survey, 1992-93

one man ticked 'none'. Once again, the gender differences were not great, although men were marginally more likely to want training in generic business and time management skills, while women were somewhat more likely to want job specific skills.

Although they do not have statistical validity, our face-to-face interviews give us some additional information on skills. One of the men interviewed in Sweden listed the following skills as necessary to meet the requirements of translation agencies and other customers: a broad technical knowledge, very good stylistic ability, the ability to adjust the work to the form required by the customer (for example the tone of the language), and the ability to communicate.

Table 10.2: Interest in on-line help, by gender, per cent of cases

	men	women
On-line help	73	89
Software support	48	44
Network support	29	37
Spelling	26	27
Grammar	22	21
Dictionaries	77	79
Thesaurus	39	47

Source: Analytica, Teleworking in Britain Survey, 1992-93

Another man in Sweden agreed that while sufficient technical knowledge was needed to translate the technical texts, it was also necessary to have adequate language skills and stylistic ability. Not surprisingly, the men emphasised the need for a broad technical knowledge because they were mainly translating technical texts. However, the Swedish woman who was also mainly translating technical texts did not stress the importance of having a broad technical knowledge to the same extent. She, along with the other female respondent in Sweden, had been formally educated as a translator at university level while the men had not, and commented:

> *'It is good to have a theoretical translation education, but this is not enough. You become a good translator if you have a feeling for the language and no formal education is a guarantee of that.'*

None of the Swedish respondents expressed an explicit need for further training during their interviews. Those who translated technical material maintained their skills by reading technical journals, and this was important because of the rapid change in language within their fields. However, one of the men told us:

> *'If you want to be efficient you have to adjust to technical development. Nineteen years ago when I started to work as a translator a modern typewriter and a telephone were enough. Today you need a computer with a modem, a fax and a telephone.'*

Among the Swedish respondents, the male teleworkers were more interested in investing in more advanced technical equipment than the female teleworkers. In the postal survey, demand for on-line help was also high for both men and women, with a particularly strong interest (expressed by over three-quarters of both sexes) in on-line dictionaries.

This high demand for training among people who are almost all experienced translators with several years of freelance work behind them must partly be explained by the speed of change in the uses of information technology. However, this does not account for the high demand for support in traditional translation areas like dictionary, thesaurus, grammar or spelling support. Part of the explanation may lie in a general raising of standards in a sector which is becoming increasingly competitive as space constraints disappear and employers can select staff from anywhere in the world where the skills and infrastructure are available. It may also reflect the insecurity of this group of workers most of whom, as we have seen, live with an ever-present threat that their livelihood may disappear.

11. Work Content and Management Issues

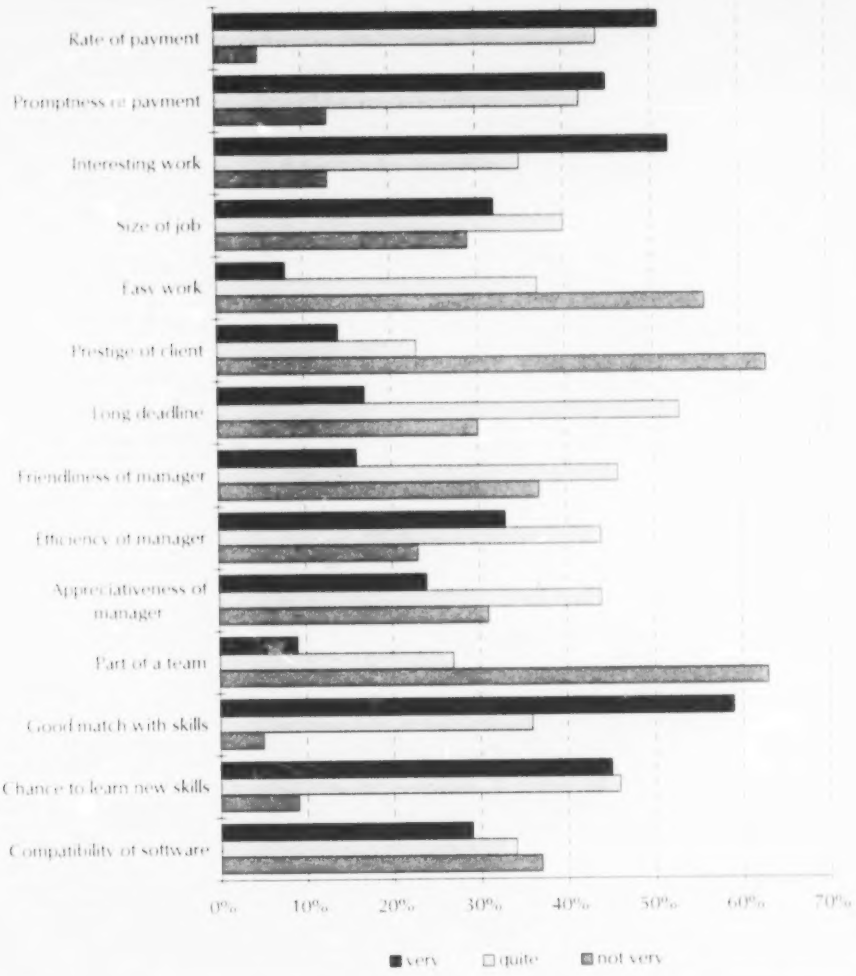
In order to gain an impression of these teleworkers' attitudes to the content of their work and to their employers, we included a series of questions in our postal survey on the factors taken into account when deciding whether or not to accept any given piece of work. Here, the gender differences were so small as to be insignificant. For ease of interpretation, the results are therefore summarised in Figure 11.1. in aggregated form.

These results suggest that it is the nature of the work itself which is the most important single criterion. Thus, nearly six out of ten (59 per cent) of respondents say that 'a good match with existing skills' is a very important factor, and 52 per cent rate 'interesting work' as very important.

These factors are, however, closely followed by pay — 51 per cent consider that the rate of payment is very important, with a further 44 per cent rating this factor as quite important. Nearly as important as the rate of payment is the promptness with which it is paid, regarded as very important by 45 per cent and quite important by 42 per cent of the sample.

Perhaps more surprisingly, a similar proportion of respondents are attracted by the idea of acquiring new skills — rated as very important by 45 per cent and quite important by 46 per cent. Despite our assurances that all results would be processed anonymously and in confidence, it is just possible that some of these replies might have been influenced by respondents' desire to present themselves to Wordbank as suitable candidates for work which is outside their known field of competence. However, we do not think that this could account entirely for the very high level of interest in this factor, which is echoed in the extraordinarily high interest in receiving further training which was discussed above and in the very low proportion (eight per cent) who regard 'easy work' as a very important factor.

Figure 11.1: Importance of criteria for acceptance of work



Source: Analytica, Teleworking in Britain Survey, 1992-93

Other factors relating to the type of job are its size and the length of time allocated for completing it. The former is regarded as very important by just under one-third of the sample (32 per cent) with 40 per cent regarding it as quite important. Only 17 per cent rate the latter as very important. However, over half (53 per cent) say that this factor is quite important. Given the fact, that these teleworkers are mostly under considerable time pressure for much of their working

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lives, this suggests that while this is a factor which they take seriously into account, most recognise that having to work to tight deadlines is a fact of life in the translation sector, which they have learned to cope with.

When it comes to factors relating to the management of the work, we find that the three factors mentioned in the questionnaire (friendliness, efficiency and appreciativeness) were rated as quite important by approximately equal numbers of respondents (between 44 per cent and 46 per cent). However, when we examine the proportion rating these as very important, we find a clear order of priority, with the largest number (33 per cent) rating 'efficiency' as very important, followed by 'appreciativeness' (24 per cent) with 'friendliness' the least important (at 16 per cent).

In another section of the questionnaire, devoted to issues which were specific to Wordbank, great stress was placed by many respondents on the importance of feedback from managers, and this factor also emerged as important in our face-to-face interviews. Almost without exception, the interviewees mentioned the lack of positive feedback from customers and agencies as a problem. 'They tell you when you have done something wrong but not when you have done a good job', as one put it. Several told us that they felt positive feedback was especially important to young or relatively inexperienced translators. The translators also felt that it made an important contribution to quality. Clients or agencies without quality control procedures were not seen as serious by them.

Several teleworkers also said that they would like better support from some of the agencies. They felt that communication with the agencies could be improved by face-to-face meetings at the beginning. This would facilitate work related communication later on.

Two factors which are relatively unimportant to the teleworkers in the postal survey are the prestige of the client and being part of a team, both of which are regarded as unimportant by nearly two-thirds (63 per cent) of respondents.

Compatibility of software is a trickier issue. While only 29 per cent say that this is very important, over one-third (34 per cent) think it is quite important. Given the very high numbers wanting further training in software skills, this suggests that

this is a subject which deserves some attention. It is possible that a substantial minority of translators may be having to turn down work which is otherwise well suited to their requirements, simply because they do not have the right software or lack the requisite skills (or perhaps because their clients are unable to carry out the necessary conversion).

12. Advantages and Disadvantages of Teleworking

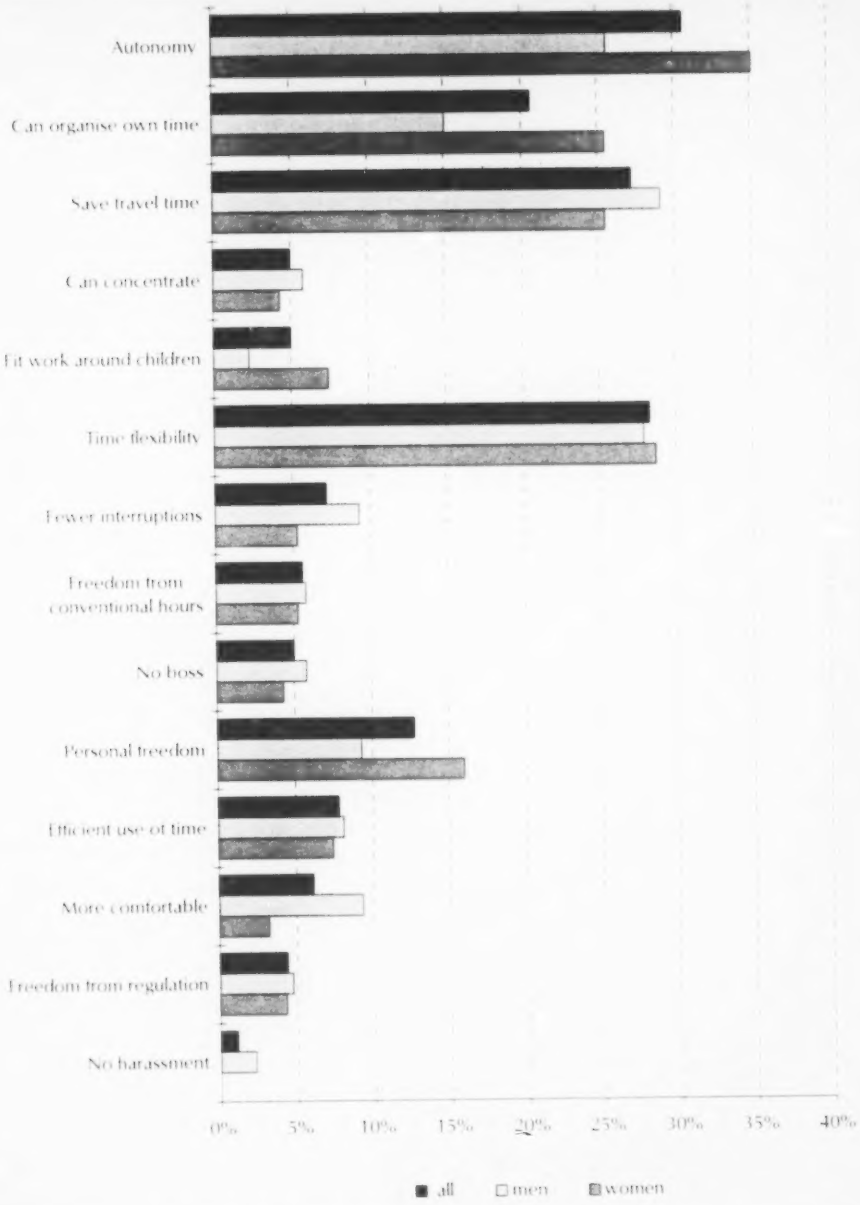
The clearest view of teleworkers' own perceptions of their working situation to be derived from the postal survey comes from the responses to open-ended questions about the advantages and disadvantages of working from home. Most respondents cited more than one factor in each category, and the responses are summarised in Figures 12.1 and 12.2. Once again, we find large numbers of men and women giving similar responses.

By far the most important advantages, for both sexes, are a group of closely related categories: 'autonomy', 'can organise own time', 'time flexibility' and 'flexibility'. All of these were more likely to be cited by women than men. Women were also more likely to mention 'can fit work round children', which is also closely related. Men, however, were more likely to mention 'freedom from conventional working hours'.

What we see here is an overwhelming dominance, when considering the attractions of working from home, of ideas about being able to manage and shift time under one's own control. This position is reinforced by other responses relating to self-determination — 'personal freedom', 'freedom from regulation' and 'no boss'. Of these, 'personal freedom' was more likely to be mentioned by women, but the other two by men.

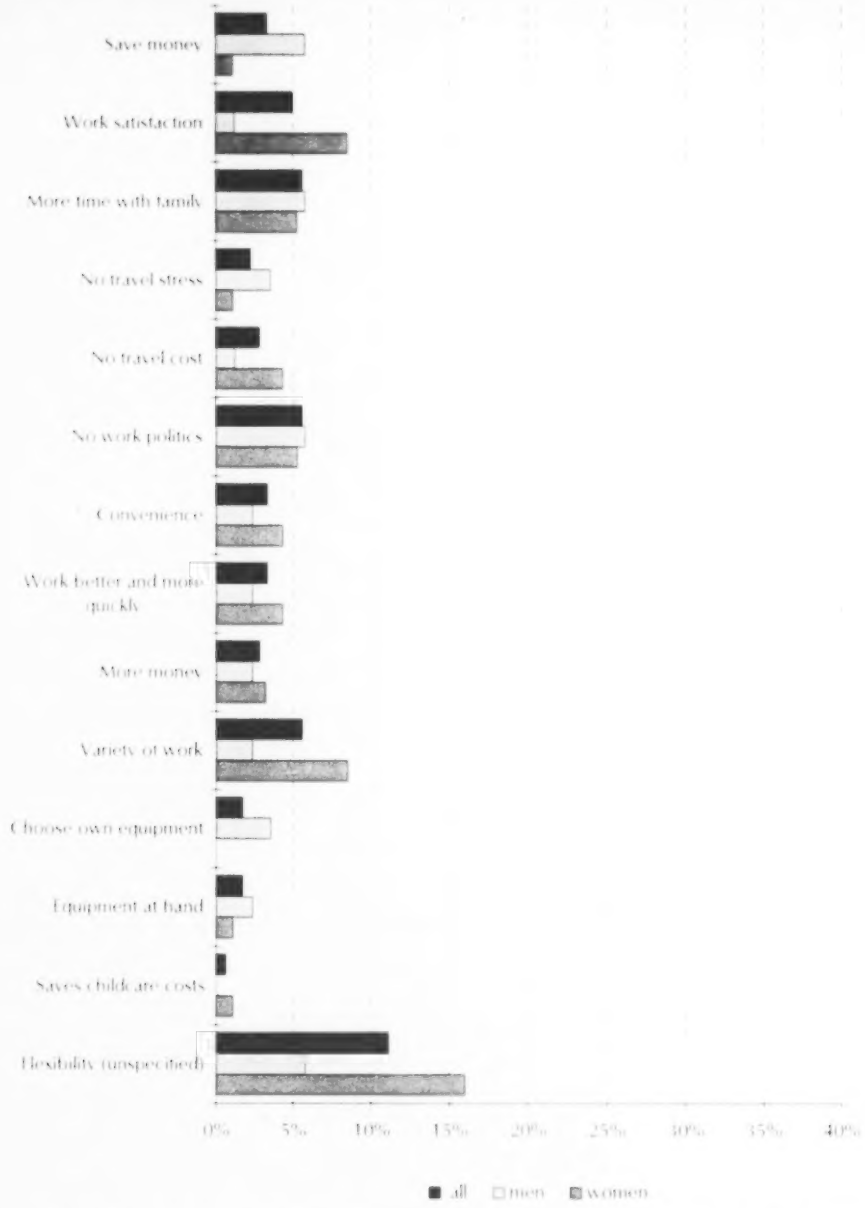
However, within this overall objective different underlying agendas can be discerned. For some, predominantly (but not exclusively) men, this autonomy appears to be sought for its own sake, as a form of individual self-expression. For others, predominantly (but not exclusively) women, the control over time is sought, not for its own sake, but to accommodate other demands, notably those of children.

Figure 12.1a: Advantages of teleworking; all and by gender



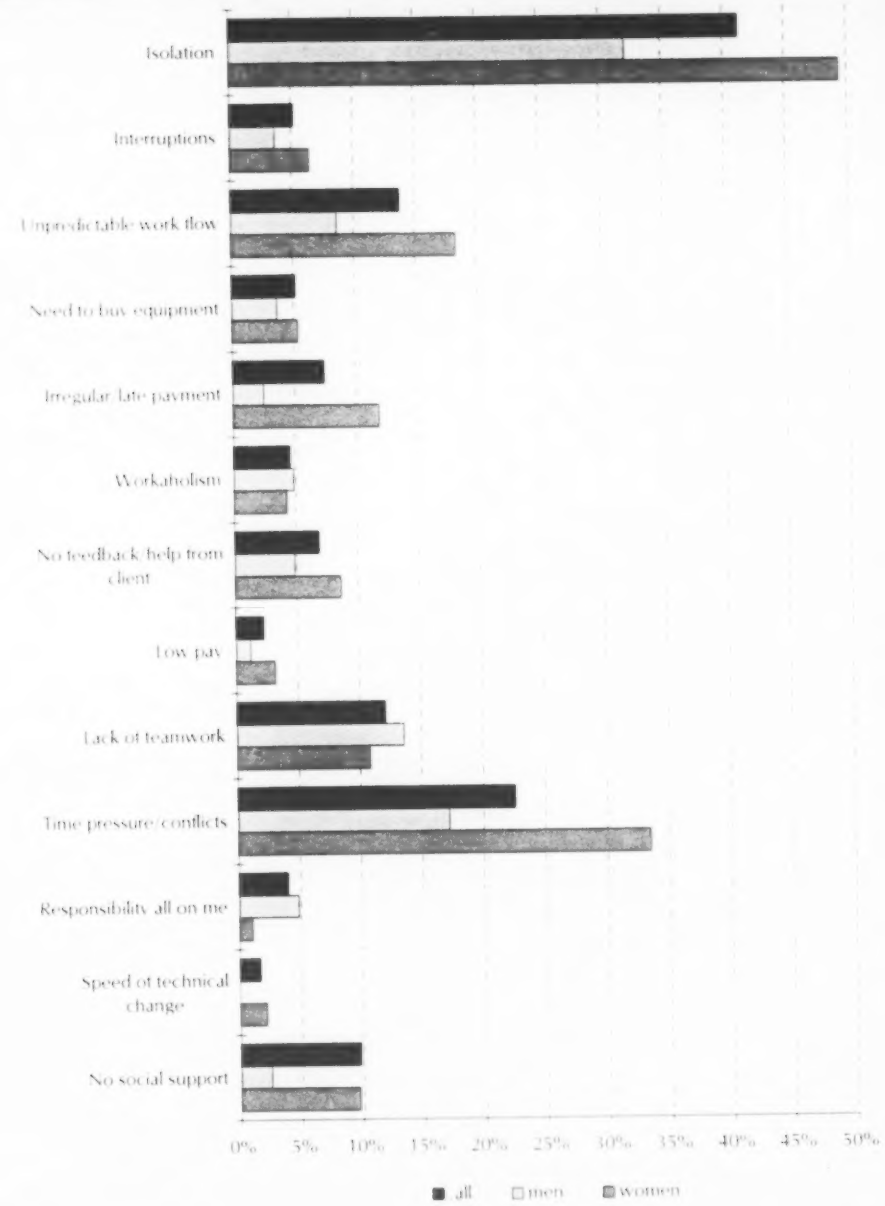
Source: Analytica, Teleworking in Britain Survey, 1992-93

Figure 12.1b: Advantages of teleworking; all and by gender (cont.)



Source: Analytica, Teleworking in Britain Survey, 1992-93

Figure 12.2: Disadvantages of teleworking: all and by gender



Source: Analytica, Teleworking in Britain Survey, 1992-93

The (predominantly male) model of teleworking as an instrument of personal liberation was expressed particularly vividly by our two Swedish 'new men'. One, in particular, had strong ideological rationalisations for his choice to work from home, saying that he thought that people were restrained and limited within traditional hierarchical organisations and that there was a need for a programme of organisational renewal to 'liberate the man from the tyranny of the organisation'. He felt strongly, he said, that many of our institutions today are closing their doors and developing very unhealthy working cultures that will lead to their own deaths. He regarded the new cultures which are developing, for example on the Internet, as much healthier. Information technology was, in his view (which remained that of a technician), neutral and he could see a positive potential in it. Speaking as a humanist, he said, he believed that society needed renewal and the solution to it was IT. 'IT means transporting information instead of material and that is what is needed on a global scale', as he put it.

Although a large number of other advantages were mentioned by small numbers of respondents, the only other group of responses of great numerical significance related to travel. Between 25 per cent and 30 per cent of respondents mentioned savings in travel time, while others referred to avoiding the stress of travel and saving its cost. The cost of travel was more likely to be mentioned by women; otherwise travel was somewhat more likely to be a male preoccupation.

Turning to our respondents' views on the disadvantages of teleworking we also find a picture of broad similarity between the sexes. Here, however, there is a noticeable tendency for women to cite more disadvantages than men. A very large number of disadvantages were cited altogether and, for ease of analysis, some of these have been aggregated and some omitted from Figure 12.2.

By far the largest single category, mentioned by nearly half the women in the sample and nearly a third of the men, was social isolation. Two other categories which are closely related to this can also be identified. These are 'no social support', mentioned by many more women than men, and 'lack of teamwork' mentioned by more men. Again, we find hints of a subtle difference of emphasis, with men apparently more likely to miss social contact which is work related, while women express a more general sense of personal isolation.

Interestingly enough, most of the remaining categories of responses of any great significance refer directly or indirectly to time management. Although the ability to control one's own time is, as we have seen, a major attraction of home based working, it seems to be extraordinarily difficult to achieve in practice. Thus we find a third of women and over 20 per cent of men complaining of time pressures. This is a category which was established by amalgamating a number of related responses including 'time pressure', 'having to divide time between work and household', 'no separation of work and leisure', 'people assume you can always be interrupted' and 'antisocial hours'.

Other time related problems are 'unpredictability of work flow', cited by 18 per cent of women and nine per cent of men, and 'danger of workaholism' mentioned by about five per cent of the sample. It appears from these data that the promise of time sovereignty offered by teleworking is rarely completely fulfilled. Indeed, data from our personal interviews suggest that the sense of being in control and the sense of being constantly interruptable are integrally linked to each other, with a seamless overlap between work and home life. This can perhaps best be illustrated by a quotation from one of our interviewees, whose description of the advantages was inseparable from that of the disadvantages of homeworking, giving the impression that the thought of any particular advantage immediately triggered a recollection of a related disadvantage, and *vice versa*. This respondent was a married woman with two young children, living in the UK away from her country of origin:

> *'The advantages are that there's no one telling you what to do or when. If you don't feel like it you don't have to work; you can take the day off. But on the other hand if you take a job and you get a cold you have to finish it to meet the deadline. It can sometimes feel a bit claustrophobic because there's no dividing line between home and work. I hate agencies phoning in the evening or at weekends. Just because you work from home they think they can and it's OK to phone in the middle of dinner. Because it's there it's always on your mind. But when I'm sitting and waiting for the printer I can read a catalogue or a magazine. You don't have to put on an image, like smart clothes and make up. Most of the time I wander around in my dressing gown all day. You don't have to travel anywhere . . . . (If I worked outside the home) it would mean a lot more hassle. I'd have to get up and get there, look presentable, deal with other people. If I owned my own office space I would feel obliged to go there at certain times and it might improve things as I'd feel obliged to go home. It might make it easier to keep it more under*

control. Here (my son) comes and pulls all the books off the wall, so I might keep it tidier if I had a separate space.'

The largest remaining group of disadvantages refer to pay (irregular or late payment and low pay rates) and to lack of feedback and help from clients. These are matters which could be more easily remedied by good employment practices.

13. Overall Assessment

As we have already seen, in a (bare) majority of cases in this sample respondents had clearly come to the conclusion that the advantages of working from home outweigh the disadvantages, saying that freelance, home based working was their preferred method. In a significant minority of cases, however, there was a preference for some other form of work, and it is clear that for many the balance was finely tipped. We were interested to find out whether they saw this choice as a personal solution which worked only for a minority of people, or whether they saw it as a pattern of working which should be adopted more generally.

In an attempt to get an overall impression of this, we asked firstly whether they thought it would be a good thing if more people worked from home, and secondly whether they thought it would make men and women more equal if more people worked from home.

Here too there were few differences between the sexes, with 79 per cent of men and 86 per cent of women thinking that it would be a good thing if more people worked from home. The postal survey does not give us data on their reasons for this belief, but answers to some of the face-to-face interviews suggest that it arises partly from a belief that the special problems they encounter would be better understood and more sympathetically dealt with if the experience were more widely shared.

On the question of whether more home based working would help to make women and men more equal, opinion was more evenly divided, although here too, the majority (58 per cent of both sexes) thought that it would.

Two contrasting positions can be illustrated by two of our male respondents. The 'househusband' we interviewed personally in the UK said:

'Yes. I can only speak from a man's point of view. Women traditionally stayed at home and looked after the children and now women can go out and work more or do part-time work. Homeworking gives you more freedom to choose. The fact that it allows people to be more flexible gives more equality and allows men and women to spend more time on what they like doing.'

By contrast, another man interviewed in the UK (who was childless but nevertheless performed 'feminine' roles in the local community like collecting his neighbours' children from school) responded:

'I know for men and women it offers the opportunity to the employer to exploit you. This falls equally on men and women. Some men and women stand up for their own rights but others need a united workforce.'

14. Conclusions

We hope that the results of this survey presented in the preceding pages have been sufficient to indicate the complexity of the relationship between gender and teleworking. Perhaps precisely because of the diversity which it offers in the organisation of work in time and place, teleworking appears equally capable both of reinforcing traditional gender roles and of challenging them.

In a few short interviews we found an extraordinary range of types: the woman who is using teleworking as a short-term means of accommodating work in a lifestyle primarily devoted to carrying out her traditional roles as a housewife and mother; the woman who is happy to work from home indefinitely as a primary breadwinner with a male 'househusband'; the woman for whom teleworking provides some personal relief from her role as carer of a frail adult; the solitary man who is only working from home because he cannot find a job elsewhere; the 'new man' fitting work in between his household chores while his wife goes out to work; the freedom-seeking individualist who sees teleworking as an escape from the shackles of the corporation. The results of our postal survey suggest that we could without difficulty have multiplied these types many times, and still have merely scratched the surface of this many-faceted topic.

It is clear that there is no simple answer to the question, 'does teleworking promote equality of opportunity between men and women?'. The answer to such a question must be a conditional one beginning with the words 'it depends'. What it depends on includes the family and lifecycle circumstances and living situation of the teleworker, his or her skills and abilities, the attitudes and practices of employers, and the attitudes and practices of spouses or partners as well as his or her personal inclinations. We hope that this report has served a useful purpose in identifying some of these variables.

In the meanwhile, there are three general conclusions which can be drawn from these results which are discussed below:

14.1 The autonomy paradox

The first is the additional evidence it supplies of the paradoxical way in which freelance teleworking is experienced. As we have seen, this form of work is often chosen precisely because it appears to offer more autonomy and control over one's working time than work in an office. It is also believed to offer greater leisure, more chances to spend time with one's family and an improved quality of life. It is clear, however, that in practice teleworking is often accompanied by precisely the opposite conditions.

Self-employed teleworkers find that they have little or no control over the flow of work and that, far from choosing their own hours, their working times are externally driven by deadlines set by the employer. Periods without work cannot be enjoyed as 'leisure' but are times of hardship and anxiety about where the next job might come from.

Teleworking does not appear to offer more leisure in most cases, because the work is always present, and many teleworkers feel obliged to keep doing it instead of taking breaks with their families, and end up working exceptionally long hours, much longer than are worked in a typical office.

14.2 Gender differences

A second important result of this research, we believe, is to cast doubt on crude models which assume that there are intrinsic differences between women's labour market behaviour and that of men. The results of this survey suggest that the relationship between domestic and economic circumstances and behaviour is much more complex, and cannot be simply 'read off' from a worker's gender.

A study in which men and women are matched by occupation does, of course, carry with it a number of problems for the researcher. Because the norm for men, and for women, in all developed countries, is to be in occupations which are dominated by one gender or the other, in a highly segmented labour market, it could be said that, by definition, not only are

the women in the sample likely to be untypical of women in general, but also the men are likely to be untypical of the generality of men. We may therefore be dealing, in terms of their social roles, with a group of relatively 'masculine' women and relatively 'feminine' men.

Furthermore, some might argue, insofar as they share their earning potential and working conditions with men, these women are privileged in relation to the broad mass of working women and conversely, insofar as they share their labour market situation with women, the men are disadvantaged compared with other men.

Labour market research has, however, by and large moved beyond regarding either men or women as homogenous groups and begun to grapple with the differences within each category, how these are modified by other variables such as class, ethnicity, age, skill level or location and the specificities of the situations in which particular occupational groups find themselves.

This study must therefore not be regarded as representative of all male workers, all female workers, or even of all teleworkers, but as a specific instance which is of special interest because it allows us, unusually, to compare men and women in a situation in which variables like skills, pay and working conditions are controlled for. Needless to say, in most surveys of workers in general and teleworkers in particular there are enormous gender differences in these variables which make it difficult to evaluate the importance of other factors.

Before we embarked on this survey, we identified two possible patterns of 'types' of household gender contract which it might identify. The first was one in which the presence of the woman in the home reinforced traditional expectations about the primacy of her domestic role and the secondary importance of her labour market activity (and hence, by implication, the primary importance of her partner's role as breadwinner). The second was a 'new man' model, in which the man's presence in the home encouraged a greater sharing of household tasks between the sexes and a convergence between traditional 'male' and 'female' roles.

Our analysis suggests that where all other things are equal there is indeed some convergence between male and female labour market behaviour and attitudes to work. The results of our case

study interviews also suggest that this type of working arrangement is conducive to a breakdown of traditional role separation, with men taking on more domestic and community tasks and women not only taking on the role of breadwinner but also, to some extent, laying down structures to protect their working lives from invasion by family demands and claiming some private space, albeit only during the hours when children are out of the home. While teleworking may be a necessary condition for this development, however, it is by no means a sufficient one, and there are clearly many situations where this does not take place. When it does, a high price is paid for it. The men in our sample had, in effect, taken on many of the disadvantages usually suffered by women in the labour market — contingent status, insecurity, relatively low pay and lack of promotion prospects.

Despite this convergence, the data also give us clear evidence of the persistence of the traditional male breadwinner/female housewife model and reveal that it is still women who are bearing the greatest portion of the responsibility for childcare.

14.3 Training

At a more mundane level, the survey has also identified an astonishingly extensive requirement for training among these teleworkers. It can be argued that one of the most serious long-term consequences of the spread of teleworking is likely to be its impact on the general skills of the population.

Recent research in Japan concluded that one of the main factors constraining the introduction of teleworking in that country is the value which is placed on in-company training under the Japanese management system, and the impossibility of teleworkers being able to keep up with in-house workers because of the lack of resources for training outside the workplace. Indeed, one teleworking scheme (a woman-run company providing software services) which had been operating successfully a few years earlier had now been disbanded as its staff could not upgrade their skills quickly enough to compete with larger companies.[1]

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[1] Suwa, Y, *Teleworking in Japan: an overview*, presentation Anglo-Japanese seminar on Teleworking, UK Department for Education and Employment, October, 1995.

The National Union of Journalists of Great Britain and Ireland, a quarter of whose members are now freelance, has also identified an enormous unmet demand for training among self-employed journalists, and is now having to change its role to provide such training in the recognition that it is no longer forthcoming at the workplace except for a privileged minority.[1]

This absence of training for the self-employed clearly raises major policy issues for national governments and for the EU, with its commitment to raising the skill levels of the workforce. Given the higher numbers of women in the informal economy, this development also has a specific impact on equality of opportunity. Unless means are found for providing this training in a form which is accessible to self-employed and home based workers, then a growing polarisation is likely to develop between 'core' and 'peripheral' workers; men and women.

14.4 Further research

There is clearly a need for further research on gender and teleworking which extends beyond the comparatively small occupational group which formed the subject of our survey. There is also a need for further studies of the needs of the self-employed, especially their needs for training and other forms of social support.

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[1] Information supplied to the author by the National Union of Journalists.

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Teleworking and Gender

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The Institute for
Employment Studies

ISBN 1-85184-244-6

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